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Performing Masculinities in South West England at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

PERFORMING MASCULINITIES IN SOUTH WEST ENGLAND AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores representations of masculinity in a range of British performance practices at the turn of the twentieth century, using the South West of England as a geographical case study.

The investigation builds on two strands of current thinking. The first of these is the growing scholarly interest in 'masculine spectacle' in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, where historians of literature, sculpture, fine art and sport amongst others have most frequently analysed images of masculinity in relation to the iconography of empire. However, there have been few interventions from theatre and performance historians on this topic, inviting a deeper consideration of how these ideals were transmitted in live public displays.

The second is the relatively nascent field of British regional history, and particularly non-London histories of leisure and live entertainment. Though I do not claim to identify a definitive South West 'style', I show that the region was a dynamic hub of innovation at the turn of the twentieth century that attracted performers and audiences from all over the country. Additionally, the many different places of performance in the South West hosted a vast range of forms and styles, and the study is an initial attempt to map this otherwise under-considered terrain.

The methodology is predominantly archive-based and draws on newspaper accounts, administrative materials, photographs and illustrations amongst other sources**.** Focussing in turn on amateur sport, physical culture, challenge match wrestling, touring entertainments and boy performers, the study argues that live performance was a unique representational mode in disseminating gendered norms in the region, with 'manhood' persistently considered a valuable social asset. I claim that the affective potential of the events described here were key to forging civic identities in communities across the South West, notably in a context of rapid social and technological development.

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I guess it's appropriate that I'm submitting this thesis in the middle of a 'crisis' (that'll be COVID-19, by the way, if by some miracle you're reading this at some point way into the future.) Despite the anxieties, I feel so lucky to have had a huge number of people helping me through this challenging but hugely rewarding experience.

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May 2020

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: DATE: April 30th, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

And what is our need at such a serious crisis? It is the need of men strong, brave, pure and healthy in their life. What we need is manhood at its very best, with its highest ideals and its strongest powers.

Press cutting in scrapbook on the eve of the Great War compiled by Bristol resident Maude Boucher[1]

Insistence upon an essential, embodied and recuperable masculinity lurking beneath the veneer of civilization is one of the most durable examples of a counter-modernity that asserts itself within and against modernity.

(Forth, 2008:5)

Is the history of masculinity to be the history of representations or practices?

(Griffin, 2018: 7)

*

This study focusses on the representational labour of men and boys in a range of live cultural practices in the South West of England at the turn of the twentieth century. It considers how particular types of masculinity were constructed in public modes of display that may have been informed by - but nevertheless distinguished from - other representational

[1] Scrapbook I, Bristol Archives, 44859/1.

media operating in the period such as photography or fine art. The study also explores the way in which every-day social practices of masculinity interconnected with these performed representations. By framing sportsmen, physical culturists, wrestlers, touring entertainers and boy actors in turn as both producers of compelling myths of masculinity through their performances yet also as individuals negotiating intensely regulatory societies in their off-stage lives, we can start to produce a fuller sense of the role of leisure and live entertainments in circulating gendered norms in the South West in the years around 1900.

The study develops the metaphor of performance to further explore the nature of masculinity itself. In the tradition of queer and feminist interventions into gender studies led most notably by Judith Butler (1988; 1990; 1993) masculinity has frequently been read through the lens of performance, or more specifically, as a matter of "showing-doing" to apply Richard Schechner's term (Schechner, 2017: 28.) The sociologist Anna Hickey-Moody sums up this view in these concise terms, emphasising gender's separation from biological factors such as chromosomes or genitals:

> masculinity is a performance; or an accumulation of performances. Masculinity is what a body *does* at particular times, rather than a universal and unchangeable condition of who you are […] Masculinity is a powerful social fiction around which bodies and subjectivities are organised.
>
> (Hickey-Moody, 2019: 31)

In an age of a "broadly intensifying consciousness of masculine spectacle" when manliness was considered paramount to the self-image of the British Empire (Deane, 2015: 58) this core

theoretical position invites a sustained application to events at the turn of the twentieth century that positioned men's bodies and the question of manhood as their core focus. These events were not only fictive worlds played out in purpose-built theatre buildings but also practices that extended out to 'the borders of performance' such as sport or civic ceremonies. I define the latter as live performance practices that marked a suspension from – but importantly were still embedded in - the activities of every-day social life. These have been usefully labelled by historian Peter Burke as 'strong performances' (Burke, 2005: 43.) I claim that the disciplinary constructs of live performance events - involving organisers, participants, designated places and prior preparation in the form of training or rehearsal - formulated masculinities in a unique and twofold way: that is, as social practices and as mechanisms for myth-making.

Methodology: Writing Past Performance Events

My decision to be inclusive of extra-daily events that took place outside of conventional, purpose-built theatre spaces reflects the core principle that the relationship between the 'stage' world and the 'social' world is one of co-constitution, where performers, organising agents and audiences were in direct dialogue with one another at the moment of dissemination. However, even if we can draw on their disparate textual or material traces in the archive, the essential ephemerality of theatre and performance means that forging an objective account of 'what really happened' is fraught with difficulty. As such, I am throughout mindful of Bruce McConachie's proposition of a 'postpositivist theatre history'. His landmark article developed a method in which knowledges of past performance events can be constructed beyond a dispassionate arrangement of objective 'facts' and towards an

understanding of theatre as a set of social acts and relations (McConachie, 1985: 467.) My methodology reflects McConachie's definition in that it seeks to identify 'actions' in the historical record before any attempt to establish an objective account of a particular theatrical event. Burke reads this historiographical method in terms of an overall theoretical tradition of postmodernity, writing that

> this sense of fluidity goes with a sense of freedom from social determinism or even social constraints, expressed in academic language as the 'invention' of traditions, the 'construction' of culture or the 'politics' of identity. In everyday language, this sense of freedom takes the form of a new emphasis on doing.
>
> (Burke, 2005: 38-39)

My archive-based approach brings me in contact with source materials that have been subject to biased authorial voices and are consequently versions of 'the truth' at best. Furthermore, as McConachie goes on to discuss, my own value-systems will inevitably mediate the analysis of the past performance event, not least because my encounters with archives were guided by particular lines of enquiry and the pre-selection of source materials (McConachie, 1985: 470-471.) Further still, the performative principle of 'doing' and not 'being' extends to the case studies themselves. They were predominantly discursive exercises that sought to build consensus around specified points of view and are therefore best read as active constructors of 'truth' and not truth themselves. In short, the construction of knowledge and truth is both the object of my study – as achieved through these consensus-building performance events – yet a notion of 'construction' also reflects the process through which I have gathered evidence and written up this study.

Appropriately to principles of 'consensus-building', then, this investigation draws extensively on accounts of performance as relayed in newspapers, periodicals and magazines. These sources are used both as records of fact but also as examples of discursive mechanisms, in that they contributed to the creation of local identities and attempted to consolidate public opinion. Print media is the most accessible and comprehensive means through which to construct accounts of live performance events in the South West around 1900, and their historiographic benefits are manifold. The mass digitisation of newspaper archives allows for a faster and more detailed cross-referencing of journalistic material than historians a couple of decades ago might have benefitted from. Full and easily searchable runs of London-administered specialist publications such as *The Era, The Stage,* the *Music Hall and Theatre Review* or *Sporting Life* are indispensable in tracking individual performers and productions, and can offer an expansive synchronic account of the many forms of entertainments produced at a given historical moment. The efficient and user-friendly interfaces of these archives also allow for close *diachronic* readings of a given venue or performer and are useful in establishing how popular repertoires developed in the light of shifting popular tastes and political change. In addition, the dedicated 'provincial' sections in *The Era* provide rich detail about live performance cultures in cities and towns all over the country.

These pieces of information can be used to corroborate primary source material or to provide vital context to the material elements of theatre such as costume or scenic design, especially when these can be matched to photographic evidence (where available.) Importantly to this study, these metropolitan sources can be read alongside local newspaper accounts to establish ways in which London-originating examples of performance were received by South West communities, or indeed how 'reading and spectating publics' in the

region may have negotiated these practices alongside their own conception of civic identity. This principle of adaptation applies to each of the case studies explored here. In effect, journalistic print materials reproduced in a digital form can give us a richer sense of how communities either adapted nationally-recognisable practices for their own needs (for example, through local expressions of Empire Day celebrations) or how performers or companies adapted their repertoires when travelling between a range of communities (typified by the practices of the Poole's Myriorama.)

However, newspaper and periodical sources should of course not be taken on trust. Whilst they have clear benefits in terms of establishing dates or tracking the movements of performers, some publications from the period had target readerships or specific editorial lines that place limits on the information we can reliably determine about the live performance events they described. This is especially the case with provincial papers around 1900 insofar as they were often speculative ventures that expressed a singular, authorial point of view, such as the *Bristol Magpie, Cheltenham Looker-On* or *Freeman's Exmouth Journal*. These should therefore be considered as outlets for consensus-building as much as repositories of fact, if not more so.

As Andrew Hobbs has noted, there were almost four times as many newspapers and periodicals produced outside of London as inside at the turn of the twentieth century. As such, he argues, they offer ripe opportunity to explore the many other reading (and spectating) cultures in Britain that have otherwise been neglected (Hobbs, 2016: 223; Hobbs, 2018: 14.) Publications circulated in specific locales disseminated news and opinions that sought to appeal to shared frames of reference. Items may have included accounts of immediate local

affairs, or perspectives on events taking place elsewhere that were tailored to local interest, with each building upon and consolidating a common local identity. Hobbs writes that

> we need to appreciate how provincial periodicals were qualitatively different in form and content from their metropolitan rivals. They catered to distinct and complex local markets; represented places and people known personally to most readers' sense of place and local identities.
>
> (Hobbs, 2016: 221)

This suggests an element of authorial bias in service of building and confirming a shared community identity, particularly given the close relationship between - or even crossover of - editors, contributors and readers. Referring specifically to theatre periodicals, Katherine Newey cites the example of how print journalism constructed an idea of British resistance to Ibsen's naturalism on the late nineteenth century London stage. This case "emphasises the discursive role of theatrical journalism in the creation of knowledgeable theatrical communities" and how such accounts are often taken as evidence of fact and not as active contributors to the forging of abiding critical myths (Newey, 2016: 370.) Whether geographically targeted or specialist in topic (or indeed both at once) it should be taken into account that the aim of most publications in the period was to build circuits of communication in their dissemination of information and opinion, and naturally these call into question claims to 'truth'.

Whilst print media sources are used throughout the study, each chapter draws on different assemblages of materials according to the nature of the performance form or set of

individuals in question. Power is at the heart of each of the case studies explored here. An interpretation along these lines will account not just for the structural and material contexts in which these performances were made, but also for the presences and absences of surviving material in the archive. The primary sources that I draw on take the form of physical documents held in established archival collections (local, national and specialist) and excerpts of digitised sources. These physical materials have each been subject to specific sets of power relations over time in the form of invested authorships, material conditions and the editorial processes of archival accessions. These factors inevitably place limits on the reading and writing of turn of the twentieth century performance practices. These sources range from legal documentation such as censuses or registrations of birth, administrative records such as minute books or financial reports, and personal literature such as scrapbooks or address books. Where available, I have also drawn on visual media depicting individuals or the performance mode in discussion. These are most commonly 'posed' photographs, but I have also included photographed examples of performances 'in progress' alongside stills from films and a handful of illustrations.

Chapter One engages with the administrative materials of South-West based Christian organisations and amateur athletic associations, tracking these alongside the reception to these practices in the local presses. This is to chart how non-professional sporting events publicised and disseminated a masculine ideal of 'equilibrium', notably in places outside of urban centres. The chapter reads how sporting events in Taunton, Tiverton and Exmouth were framed by each town's efforts towards municipal improvement and argues that men's bodies were core signifiers in the *mise-en-scene* of new sporting grounds or, in the case of Exmouth, of proximity to the desirable Devon coast, replete with its connotations of British endeavour

on the global stage. With local branches of the Young Men Christian Association advocating a model of manliness that balanced regular spiritual engagement, professional dedication and attention to physical fitness, we can see how live sporting events were displays of middle-class sensibility that foregrounded proportionate male bodies. In addition, it examines how the sports were frequently supported by expressly theatrical features such as elaborate prizegiving ceremonies and musical programmes. Other textual materials such as programmes, minute books or entry forms can help to make sense of the movement of sportsmen and spectators across the region and from locations all over the country, consolidating the South West of England as an attractive sporting destination in its own right. These also indicate the strict bureaucracy involved in upholding the 'amateur' standard, and by extension the ideology of equilibrium.

Chapter Two draws on a similar blend of local newspaper correspondence, health pamphlets and specialist magazines to explore the presence of bodybuilder Eugen Sandow in Bristol. His blend of showmanship and commerce were designed to appeal to the middle-class market in the city and his discourses were frequently organised around a principle of relief from the strains of modern living. Sandow's presentation of his body across a range of representational media could not reliably direct the spectator's gaze or guarantee a predisposed ideological viewpoint, and I argue this was especially the case on live entertainment stages. His repertoires of nearly-nude classical poses combined with elaborate stunts and canny marketing are read in the context of an overall "scopic economy" that prioritised and sought profit from novelty, revealing the 'built' male body on stage as a consumable good and not only as an ideological phenomenon.

Chapter Three uses the newspaper archives to compare metropolitan accounts of the turn-of-the-twentieth century 'wrestling craze' with reportage on local challenge matches as they appeared on South West popular stages. These journalistic sources are supported by sporting manuals and a few photographs and illustrations to show how visual displays of wrestlers' bodies were ubiquitous across all representational media in the first decade of the twentieth century, including on the popular stage. Given the South West's significant tradition of wrestling, played out most forcefully through the historic rivalry between Devon and Cornwall, the chapter explores the blending of the serious business of sport with the thrills of spectacular entertainment, placing this process of adaptation in the context of local reception. These new wrestling spectacles on South West variety stages configured performing male bodies in one sense as symbols of nationalist fantasy and in another as the epitome of local pride. I show that locality and shared frames of reference – captured in the term 'knowingness' - were paramount to the way in which variety wrestling matches were organised, disseminated and received in the region.

Chapter Four, which focusses on the life and career of Bath-born entertainer Carl Fredricks, benefits from perhaps the most comprehensive set of primary source materials available including photographs, professional documents and touring itineraries. These materials are enhanced by references to Fredricks' activities that appear in both the key theatrical periodicals such as *The Era* and also extensively in local presses all over the country, including many South West newspapers such as the *Bath Chronicle* or *Weston-super-Mare Gazette.* Though virtually no first-hand 'ego-documents' such as letters or diaries appear to survive, this wealth of information can be arranged chronologically to chart the life course of Fredricks from a teenage telegraph clerk to revered entertainment professional (and local

celebrity.) A biographical approach, I argue, reveals masculine identity as a process of continuous adaptation. For Fredricks, this took the form of switching between different personas on stage that were often prompted by changing fashions or developing global affairs, yet also adaptation to off-stage roles in his personal and social life. He interacted with several different communities across the country over the course of his touring career, all the while balancing this itinerant life with his responsibilities as a husband and father. As such, the chapter makes a unique contribution to the historiography of turn-of-the-century touring entertainments. Materials in the Fredricks archives open up new lines of inquiry on specific professional networks and the many geographies of live performance operating in Britain at the time, from the seaside promenades of Weston-super-Mare and Lytham St Annes to the halls of small inland towns such as Tonypandy in Wales or Keighley in Yorkshire.

The fifth and final chapter draws on a blend of journalistic sources and late Victorian sociological or medical studies to explore the turn of the twentieth century discourse on boys. More specifically, it examines how these discourses shaped critical opinion on the otherwise under-considered representational labours of boys in live performance events. Boys on and off stage were subject to what the psychoanalyst Ken Corbett has termed 'regulatory anxiety' (Corbett, 2009b: 354) through which their behaviours were scrutinised and, if necessary, redirected. On the rare occasions that boys appeared on commercial theatre stages (at least in comparison to girls) theatre critics would frequently judge their performances based on their capacity to represent dominant conceptions of masculine behaviour, with descriptors such as 'manful' or 'natural boyishness' especially common in these reviews. This analysis is applied to the appearances in the South West of two of the period's most well-known boy actors, Vyvian Thomas and Bobbie Andrews, both of which had considerable reputations in the

London West End in the first decade of the twentieth century. On the other hand, boys living in the South West were considerably more likely to take part and 'perform' in civic ceremonies such as Empire Day celebrations or Boys' Brigade demonstrations, and the chapter closes with a reading of how these child-centric displays were key to fostering collective civic identity.

A couple of notes on periodization. In order to capture the many complex social, political and industrial processes that contextualised the live performance events discussed here, I use the inclusive and non-definitive term 'turn of the twentieth century' as the chief marker of historical period. Other accounts that refer to Britain in the latter decades of the long nineteenth century have placed temporal limits using fixed numerical dates. Perhaps most famous is Eric Hobsbawm's macro-historical *The Age of Empire: 1875 – 1914,* the Overture of which proposes that the era was characterised by paradoxes and contradictions. These include how the practices of industrial capitalism fostered movements that attempted to plot its downfall as evidenced by increased unionisation, or the marginalisation of bourgeois liberalism as a political force whose "very existence as a class of masters was undermined by the transformation of its own economic system" (Hobsbawm, 1987: 10.) Hobsbawm also suggested (at the time of writing in the late 1980s) that "the culture of everyday life is still dominated by three innovations of this period: the advertising industry in its modern form, the modern mass circulation newspaper or periodical, and […] the moving photograph or film" (Hobsbawm, 1987: 8) As we shall see in all five case studies, each of these innovations influenced live performance and entertainments in the South West, either as outlets for publicity or - especially in the case of early film - as direct competitors to commercial theatre practices in the popular leisure market. The uber-signifier of empire was also a crucial aspect to this era, particularly in the context of British masculinities. Bradley Deane's literary study

Masculinity and the New Imperialism: Rewriting Manhood in British Popular Literature 1870-1914 (2015) uses the dates in the title to identify a moment where manliness and Empire were "part of a broader cultural conviction that the two were mutually constitutive, that they made and reaffirmed each other" (Deane, 2015: 1.) Similar periodization relating to the interplay between manliness and British Empire is used in R.H MacDonald's *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement 1890-1914* (1990) or Patrick McDevitt's *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire 1880-1935* (2004).

Though there are clear methodological benefits for stipulating definitive timescales – I am not suggesting that the above authors are unjustified in using those dates - I prefer to think of the historical period as a 'turn' and not as an inflexible phase of time. 'Turns', whether historical or theoretical, are never sudden temporal moments of 'all-change' but are instead gradual processes of development through which new ideas and knowledges are built. Importantly, these developments do not emerge fully or equally across all social configurations or geographical locations. This is especially relevant for my study as it encompasses many different communities within and beyond the South West. Attitudes towards the British Empire, for example, were not uniform between (or even inside) the communities in focus here, and the technological innovations that Hobsbawm lists were more widely available in urbanised areas of the region during the era. Though I have used 1880 to 1914 as a rough guiding principle when identifying my source material - as with most of the others listed above, it is difficult to *not* consider August 1914 as a watershed moment for Britain and the modern West - some of the unique developments in the forms, styles or lives that make up my case studies have led me to material dated slightly before or slightly after this period. Therefore, I have settled on 'turn of the twentieth century' as the organising

temporal framework. January 1st, 1900 is not especially notable to the argument in and of itself, but it is instead deployed as a satellite around which various trends or patterns of change in live performance cultures were in orbit, and better captures the uneven or unpredictable trajectories in play.

Theorising Men and Masculinities: Crisis

This study engages with an assemblage of theoretical positions that are derived from ongoing debates in the field of masculinity studies. In the sections that follow, I will outline three of these key concepts – 'crisis', 'counter-modernity' and 'hegemonic masculinity' - and show how each of these can be modified in support of a performance historiography. For the past three decades, narratives of crisis in the Anglo-American context have been ubiquitous across both popular and scholarly literature (for example, see Clare, 2000 and Robinson, 2000 for accounts of crisis as endemic to millennial masculinities.) It is a productive metaphor for men's often fragmented social and emotional development yet also, relevantly to this study, can be deployed as a critical tool for examining historical configurations of masculinity. Focussing on the former in his aptly titled book *Masculinity in Crisis* (1994) the psychotherapist Roger Horrocks suggests that masculinity is not just *in* crisis but actually *is* crisis itself and should thus be considered the key cornerstone of masculine identity. Though Horrocks' book was published in Britain over a quarter of a century ago, his narrative of crisis is useful in exploring masculinity as a configuration of social practice: as something that is done or worked towards as opposed to something that one already possesses. His writing is especially strong in tracking the (potentially grave) physical and psychic consequences of the subject's confrontation with mythic ideals of masculinity and an active struggle to conform to those

ideals. Speaking from his psychotherapeutic experience, Horrocks identifies precarity, risk and competition as the signature features of masculinity that can have potentially damaging and counter-productive effects on the male subject. In turn, these agonistic attempts to chase this social identity threaten repercussions for women, girls and other men and boys who are unable or unwilling to meet the given standard. This perspective equates masculinity and its attendant privileges in terms of loss and denial. Horrocks suggests that

> manhood as we know it in our society requires such a self-destructive identity, a deeply masochistic self-denial, a shrinkage of the self, a turning away from whole areas of life, that the man who obeys the demands of masculinity has become only half-human. […] This is the constant threnody I hear from those men who come to see me in therapy: to become the man I was supposed to be, I had to destroy my most vulnerable side, my sensitivity, my femininity, my creativity, and I also had to pretend to be both more powerful and less powerful than I feel.
>
> (Horrocks, 1994:25)

We might say that masculinity is made readable through what it is *not,* rather than what it *is.* Whilst the implication that femininity is therefore equitable with 'humanity' is not unproblematic, it is hard to disagree that heteronormative masculinity often depends on a repeated disavowal of certain emotions or expressions of vulnerability. For Horrocks, crisis-in-masculinity is predominantly a health issue where the circulation of *ideological* messages about 'real' or 'natural' men – and about the rewards for successfully meeting this standard or the penalties for failure - have profound *material* effects on body and mind.

A principle of loss at the heart of masculine identity finds its main exponent in psychoanalysis. Calvin Thomas' *Masculinity, Psychoanalysis, Straight Queer Theory* (2008) applies psychoanalytic readings to cultural representations of heterosexual masculine identity – particularly in film - and shows how these practices are capable of 'queering' supposedly stable markers of identity. Other studies such as Ken Corbett's *Boyhoods* (2009) or a chapter in Anna Hickey-Moody's *Deleuze and Masculinity* (2019: 63-100) critique the oft-cited story of Little Hans originally attributed to Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud in 1907 to illustrate the occasionally fraught psychosocial (and psychosexual) development of boys. The psychoanalytic view emphasises that male subjectivity is constructed through a necessary process of detachment. In other words, boys can only achieve a secure masculine identity via an active separation from the feminine, often through some form of public demonstration. This process is at the core of David Gilmore's transcultural anthropological study *Manhood in the Making* (1990.) Analysing rituals in patriarchal societies as diverse as Truk Island in Papua New Guinea or regions of Southern Spain, Gilmore examines the seemingly far-reaching idea of how gender identities - and binaristic gender orders as a whole - are formulated in relation to maternal origin:

> In most societies, each individual must choose one or the other [gender identity] unequivocally in order to be a separate and autonomous person recognizable as such by peers and thus to earn acceptance. […] In most societies, the little boy's sense of self as independent must include a sense of the self as different from his mother, as separate from her in both ego-identity and in social role. Thus for the boy the task of separation and individuation carries an added burden and peril. […]

> To become a separate person the boy must perform a great deed. He must pass a test; he must break the chain to his mother.
>
> (Gilmore, 1990: 27-28)

In this narrative, masculinity is not hardwired into an individual at birth but instead proven through distinct, peer-facing displays: through 'performances of great deeds'. Separation narratives foreground an essential crisis in masculine identity where individuals move from one psychosocial state to another through their active effort, whether voluntary or coerced. As Horrocks outlines, these efforts towards masculinity can carry risks of physical or mental harm.

Though psychoanalysis appears to carry a lot of weight in diagnosing so-called crises in masculinity, this will not be a distinctly psychoanalytical study. I am aware that my chosen timeframe coincides with the burgeoning field of psychoanalysis and sexology from which Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis emerged at the turn of the twentieth century. As historians of sexuality and the *fin-de-siècle* have each recognised, these new systems of thought ran parallel to an increased recognition of gender non-conformity in arts and literature, and notably so in the theatres and the music halls (see Weeks, 1989; Bratton, 1996; McCarroll, 2015). Having said this, whilst symbolic constitution of bodies and masculine identities through performance is certainly of interest here, I argue it can only ever tell half the story of social practices as these very symbols are often too reductive. Psychoanalysis does not reliably acknowledge the materiality of the body or the way in which these bodies specifically *perform* their power, and often cannot account for the nuances of individual experience. However, I do not completely reject that a process of loss is a crucial element to the precarious formulation of heteronormative masculinity. In fact, with performance read throughout this study as a

live, embodied test of masculinity in which bodies are exposed to communal scrutiny and potentially to unpredictable environmental factors, this formulation of gender shares common ground with the live performance moment. Each construct is haunted by failure where the effort to adequately represent or 'stick to the script' are contingent on circumstances outside the performing subject's control. Reading performances of masculinity as fertile grounds for 'crisis' is therefore a useful way to further interrogate the essential fragility of masculine identity, with male-predominating public displays in the South West often constructed to avert - or at least conceal - that fragility.

Whilst crisis narratives are often written in the pejorative sense, an alternative way of deploying the term is as a discursive and thus political tool. This is to view crisis as a performative speech act, where there is no 'crisis' beyond its iteration as such. With specific reference to men and masculinities, 'crisis' in this framework becomes a subjective position that is contingent on an individual's political leanings or perception about what men are or should be: one man's crisis is another man's stability. For example, as Chapters One and Two will demonstrate, there were differences in interpretation over what the end goal of physical exercise should be and what a desirable male body type looked like. The amateur athletic organisations in Chapter One advocated physical exercise as a corrective to sedentary office work for middle class men. The visual materials they circulated for publicity portrayed the ideal male body as slender and proportionate [see Fig 1.1.] In Chapter Two, whilst Sandow also offered courses of exercise aimed at alleviating the strains of modern living, his spectacular and highly developed presentation of his body on popular variety stages offset these practices, and these in turn drew derision from key officers in the amateur athletic movement. To give another example, Carl Fredricks' stint with the Poole's Myriorama

coincided with Britain's controversial military campaign in South Africa. As we shall see in Chapter Four, the highly pro-British entertainments were occasionally performed for communities who would have wanted nothing more than for that crisis in national identity or military capacity to undermine Britain's global dominance.

As I have argued above, the structures of live performance offer a unique cultural mode in which masculine anxieties at a certain time and place can be rehearsed, performed and scrutinised. For this reason, they are especially fruitful objects of analysis for commentaries on 'crises' of identity. However, such studies remain somewhat scarce in theatre and performance research, and none that I can identify deal specifically with turn-of-the-twentieth century performance. One exception to the former is Fintan Walsh's *Male Trouble: Masculinity and the Performance of Crisis* (2010) in which he offers an insightful articulation of how Western artistic practices have intersected with vocabularies of crisis to represent post-millennial masculinities. His investigation draws extensively on psychoanalysis and queer theory to examine a wide range of case studies on these terms, including British in-yer-face playwriting, body-centric live art and trash television from America. Throughout his discussion, Walsh emphasises the "reconstitutive" elements central to performances of crisis, reading his selected practices in terms of a *process* where notions of masculinity are in a persistent state of renegotiation. He identifies that

> discourses of crisis rarely concede to the condition's reconstitutive dimension. In place of this presumption of stasis, or failure, I suggest that crisis is not an end in itself but a period of disorder that precedes and precipitates a longer period of productivity, restructuring, and

> redevelopment, which may even lead to the reestablishment of the temporarily agitated norm.
>
> (Walsh, 2010:8)

As Walsh proposes, whilst a critical moment might initiate a period of restructuring and rethinking, he is also correct to suggest that these moments "may even lead to the reestablishment of the temporarily agitated norm" (Walsh, 2010: 8) where dominant views on masculinity are 'doubled down' on as a way of forging order and clarity in moments of confusion.

Counter-Modernity

This view on the reconstitutive capacity of a crisis moment is developed convincingly by the cultural historian Christopher E. Forth in his book *Masculinity in the Modern West: Gender, Civilization and the Body* (2008.) Taking a wide historical and geographical focus to take stock of the development of 'civilization' in Europe over the past five hundred years, Forth's project questions the role of 'crisis' as an organising idea for the historical account of men in the modern West, preferring instead to adopt the term 'counter-modernity'. Forth's project acknowledges that male bodies in Western civilization have been subject to a series of competing influences from the early modern period onward. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint a time in Western history in which masculinity might have been considered wholly stable and unquestionable. Critiquing the widespread designation of masculinity in- or as-crisis in contemporary academia and media, Forth offers a contrasting line of thinking that

posits 'crisis' as not in itself adequate to the study of men and masculinities due to its frequency across the historical record. He suggests that

> if there is no stable or non-critical period to be found prior to the disturbance in question (and historians have not found one), then the very idea of a crisis makes little sense. [Other scholars] draw upon the work of Judith Butler and other contemporary theorists to argue that, given the constructed nature of the self […] some sense of crisis is endemic to any attempt to form a coherent and unified identity. Still others have seen in the rhetoric of crisis a performative strategy seeking to bring about the very disruption being described […] if allegations of crisis are only reactions against the social and economic challenges of marginalized groups, how do we account for earlier manifestations of gender disturbance, especially during periods when white, middle-class men seemed to enjoy unprecedented socio-economic power?
>
> (Forth, 2008:3-4)

I have already acknowledged and accepted two of the elements of crisis that Forth proposes here: on the one hand as 'endemic' to all kinds of identity formation (though particularly with men and masculinity) and on the other as an enunciated performative strategy that invites periods of restructuring. However, I would also suggest that an experience of crisis is similar to an experience of modernity insofar as they share a common temporal structure. In essence, they are each organised around a period of confusion from which a productive phase of redevelopment might emerge. At its core, then, to experience modernity is to experience crisis; crisis as a temporal phenomenon could even be regarded as the key characteristic of modern

life. The renowned description offered by American political scientist Marshall Berman places an important emphasis on contradiction and paradox, where old knowledges are dislocated as new ideas come to the fore. He says

> to be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology; in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish.
>
> (Berman, 1982:15)

Forth applies Berman's influential account of modernity to his analysis of Western masculinities. At least in principle, Forth accepts that the gender order is formulated along lines of disruption and ambiguity. He writes that "gender is enmeshed in a complex web of social relationships, institutional frameworks and representational schemes that have undergone a series of dislocations connected to the general experience of modernity" (Forth, 2008: 4.) However, Forth extends this view further to explore how the oppressive and often violent *re-establishment* of essentialist ideas about gender and bodies is another consequence of modernising society. Forth writes that

> modernity is continually troubled by what Ulrich Beck describes as "counter-modernity", a discourse that "absorbs, demonizes and dismisses the questions raised and repeated by modernity" by positing "constructed certitudes" in the face of the liquefying tendencies of modernization. Arising with and in reaction to modernity, counter-modern impulses seek to renaturalize many of the things that modernity sends into motion, often by imagining a new modernity purged of its unhealthy or "feminizing" components.
>
> (Forth, 2008: 5)

These discourses fall back on and essentialise a 'natural' divisibility between males and females, assigning physical prowess and strength as core male prerogatives due to perceived biological supremacy. Aside from their implicit hetero-sexism, counter-modern practices also tended to give rise to racist and ableist agendas. In a chapter exploring Western manhood and degeneration in a range of European contexts around 1900, Forth rightly points out that these agendas were often legitimised by medical research, using the example of a Victorian craniological study comparing Parisian skulls from the twelfth and nineteenth centuries. The study claimed that the crucial values of Western civilization developed and instituted in the West in those intervening seven-hundred years – including reason, self-control, heterosexuality and marriage – corresponded with larger cranial size, therefore providing empirical 'proof' of the moral and intellectual supremacy of Western societies (2008:143.) Though this study is methodologically (not to mention ethically) dubious, this example was a typical response to concerns that Western manhood was degenerating at an uncertain (indeed *critical*) cultural moment. In the British context, it is not insignificant that these conversations

coincided with anxieties about an increasingly profligate pool of men from which to recruit for the Second Boer War, typified by George F Shee's provocative article "The Deterioration of the National Physique" published in 1903 (Shee, 1903: 797-805.)

If modernisation undermined the heteronormative, white-dominant power structure and thus "threatened Western society with a reversal of hierarchies of race, gender and class" (2008:145), *counter-modern* practices sought to avert this and preserve masculinities that were seen to embody national strength and purity. Historical accounts of crisis invite the possibility to 'mark' men as gendered subjects within hegemonic structures, and as such, they can reveal that the male body *in and of itself* was rarely the stable and uncontested site of power that the social Darwinists would have had us believe. Counter-modernity is the process by which these moves towards change are undermined or outright dismissed by governing elites through which "constructed certitudes" of sex, race, physical ability or economic class were invoked. All five contexts of live public display drawn on in the chapters that follow each hint at an attempt to rebuild fragile hierarchies where white, British and able-bodied maleness was transmitted to communities as a coherent locus of power around which all other identities were organised. However, as Forth reminds us, these performances of masculinity were always "prone to failures, lapses and refusals" (Forth, 2008: 3.) The shared lexicon between crisis and (counter-)modernity, then, is useful to not just articulate the ways in which 'natural' masculinity was expressed in performance but also to expose that 'naturalness' as a fragile – yet still potent – social fiction.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Whilst crisis and counter-modernity are useful tools to track diachronic historical change, they alone cannot account for the sheer range of ontological positions that may have been held in relation to masculine ideals at a given historical moment. How do we account for the men who could not – or would not – conform to dominant ways of 'being a man' at the turn of the twentieth century, either through their lack of resources or capital or through their active rejection of the 'powers that were'? One of the most influential ways in which these social power dynamics can be accounted for is through the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', pioneered by the sociologist Raewyn Connell in her field-defining books *Gender and Power* (1987) and *Masculinities* (1995: 67-86). Developing the thought of philosopher Antonio Gramsci, whose class analysis "refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life" (1995: 77) Connell proposes that

> hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position and the subordination of women.
>
> (Connell, 1995: 77)

According to Connell, what counts as hegemonic is subject to displacement over time and can operate differently in different contexts:

> hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupied the

> hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable.
>
> (1995: 76)

With its fundamental focus on relationality, the theory offers a provisional model for tracking the generation of intra-masculine hierarchies and the distribution of power between groups and individuals at a given historical moment. Though Connell's chapter focusses primarily on the symbolic or structural factors of this exchange – materialist accounts of how the precise resources and mechanisms are accrued to secure hegemonic status are compiled elsewhere (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) - the model has appealed to historians of masculinities as it helps to illuminate both the synchronic and diachronic dynamics of gender relations. Further, it offers a convincing vocabulary for how gendered power is constituted, how that power is upheld, and how that power might be resisted and displaced.

Connell proposes three positions in relation to the hegemonic model. The first of these is 'subordination', which refers to behaviours or identities that are symbolically "expelled from hegemonic masculinity" (1995: 79). As historians Harry Cocks (2010: 1-15) and Sean Brady have both shown, British societies at the turn of the twentieth century adhered to a "culture of resistance" around male homosexual acts in that their lack of discussion in legal, journalistic or professional discourses served "to protect the precarious status of Victorian and Edwardian masculinity" (Brady, 2005: 1.) Against this backdrop, a hegemonic status was typically secured by a man through marriage and therefore a realisation of compulsory heterosexuality, with male-male sexual activity made subordinate through institutional strategies of silence. The second of these positions is "complicity", denoting behaviours or practices that sustain the patriarchal system. Within such structures, men benefit from a

'patriarchal dividend', defined by Connell as "the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women" (1995: 79.) Connell suggests that whilst the number of men actually 'performing' a given hegemonic ideal is likely to be very small, men in this grouping demonstrate behaviours that reproduce that ideal and thus reify its power and influence (or do little to challenge it.) This could be applied to the heavily gendered regimes of physical culture outlined in Chapter Two. The participation of men and women in the commerce of physical health, be it through their purchase of products, periodicals or seats at public demonstrations, upheld Sandow's iconic representations of masculinity and the values he espoused – health, strength, moderation of diet and so on. The 'complicit' position in the dynamic may also apply to the displays of middle-class respectability shown by the amateur sportsmen of Chapter One, and also at points in the professional development of touring entertainer Carl Fredricks in Chapter Four. The third position is 'marginalisation' to signify how other structures of power interact with the gender order to privilege or subordinate specific groups or individuals. The infamous freakery spectacles of Barnum and Bailey – whose 'Greatest Show on Earth' visited Bedminster in Bristol in 1898[2] - exemplify how intersecting categories of identity can overlap at once and be organised in service of a hegemonic structure. The Barnum business model was essentially to make profit from unusual or novel human forms, in this case individuals who fell outside the white, European, able-bodied and anatomically normative 'default'. These various intersections became 'marked' to foreground differences between classes of people and were even deployed as a mechanism by the dominant group to define and buttress their power. As Connell reminds

[2] Brochure for 'Barnum and Bailey: Greatest Show on Earth', North Street near Bedminster Park, Bristol, 15 - 18 August, 1898, University of Bristol Theatre Collection, TC/M/373.

us, "marginalization is always relative to the *authorization* of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group" (1995: 80-81.) In an entertainment infrastructure that prized the figure of the business-savvy showman and his tuning-in to popular tastes, it is clear to see how the Barnum enterprises depended on marginalisation as a means of occupying a place at the top of the structure (however provisional such a position might be.)

Whilst it is a productive basic model through which to interrogate the dynamics of power within "a given pattern of gender relations", the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been subject to several critiques and modifications, most relevantly in historical studies. A particularly surgical example of this has been offered by historian Ben Griffin in his recent paper "Hegemonic Masculinity as a Historical Problem" (2018). Drawing on numerous scholars to identify seven key shortcomings with Connell's framework, Griffin suggests that despite its ubiquity in the study of masculinities and the lack of an alternative to match its clarity, hegemonic masculinity does not offer the close analytical precision that historical constructions of gender relations might require. For instance, the historiography of the touring entertainer Carl Fredricks in Chapter Four might demand that kind of precision given evidence of his movement between several social formations over his life course – family responsibilities, business negotiations, transport arrangements, and so on. Here, I will focus on three of the queries that Griffin outlines as they particularly speak to a micro-historical, region-specific account of performed masculinities. These are 'the problem of scale', 'the situational identity problem' and the question of ontology.

Firstly, the 'problem of scale' centres around the question: at what level of social formation and in what precise conditions might hegemonic masculinity operate? Griffin asks:

> does hegemonic masculinity represent the dominant form of masculinity within 'the West', a particular nation-state, a region, a city, a class, or a religious denomination? […] Does the same pattern of hegemony, subordination, complicity and marginalisation occur at each level of scale, like a fractal geometry recursively reappearing at different levels of magnification? Or does the structure of power relations change at each level of analysis?
>
> (Griffin, 2018: 5)

In an era with increased transportation capabilities for middle-class workers and pleasure-seekers, this question of scale takes on extra significance in this study for a couple of key reasons. Firstly, it should be acknowledged that this kind of travel was dependent on easy access to rail or tram stations as well as the necessary income to make use of them in the first place. Given these resources were not widely distributed and favoured those in urban settings, it is hard to speak meaningfully of a consolidated hegemonic masculinity at a national or even regional level. This in turn suggests certain limits in communication. As I will explore in Chapter Four with the case of Poole's Myriorama, the prospect for cross-community dialogue was increased during a sustained period of touring as the company was able to book a range of venues situated across a wide variety of locations. However, Griffin points out the historiographical dilemma of "whether it is meaningful to speak of cultural hegemony when describing periods before the era of mass communication" adding that

> when we consider nineteenth-century Britain, we find that working-class identities were still rooted in particular localities that shared

> distinctive oral and written dialects, so it is difficult to speak about a shared national working-class culture.
>
> (Griffin, 2018: 7)

For instance, the distinctiveness of localities and shared cultural references at the local level are vital components of the variety wrestling matches explored in Chapter Three, although it should be noted that audiences at variety halls were likely to have been composed of individuals from a range of economic circumstances. A performance history of masculinity should be sensitive to the uneven distribution of resources between geographically dispersed communities as well as to the exchange of tightly held values and traditions. As Griffin reminds us "power relations *between* masculinities have [historically] been a fundamental element of the gender order" (Griffin, 2018: 1.)

Linked to the problem of scale, the second notable objection that Griffin raises is what he calls the "situational identity problem" (Griffin, 2018: 8.) This poses the question: is it ever the case that men continually perform the same identity as they navigate different social formations? In other words, is a man who occupies a 'subordinate' position in a particular social context beholden to that position in *every* situation? In relation to the Gramscian notion of cultural hegemony that seeks to make sense of power relations at the level of a ruling economic class, transposing the concept to the study of masculinities might imply the existence of 'micro-hegemonies' at play in specific social formations. The model of equilibrium to be discussed in Chapter One consisted of multiple and overlapping social spheres in the course of a man's life, including the church, the workplace, the home, and the sporting field. In order to meet this standard, there was a necessity for middle-class boys and men to adapt their behaviours to each sphere accordingly. Though the ideology of equilibrium prized a

coherent and synergistic self, it could nevertheless only be achieved through a navigation of distinct and necessarily separate social configurations, each with their own rules and permitted behaviours. There was an inevitable shift in register between the rites of Communion and the rites of competitive team sport, for example. These overlaps suggest that some care needs to be taken when indicating who might be 'hegemonic' in these different performance constructs, who the organising agents were, and who bore witness to (and helped to police) those behaviours.

We might also acknowledge shifts in dynamics *between* men of distinct economic or social groups. Historian Ava Baron, for instance, suggests that working men in turn of the twentieth century Britain disparaged the "brainwork" of clerical employment and that the bodies and dress of male office workers became the target of working-class mockery (2006:149.) In further reference to Chapter One, it is no accident that the definition for the Young Men's Christian Association in J. Redding Ware's dictionary *Passing English of the Victorian Era* reads somewhat disparagingly as "Goody-goody, pure in excelsis" (1909: 270). In the context of rationalisation strategies like the Christian youth organisations that set up a notional ideal of manliness against which all were measured, some attention needs to be paid to supposedly subordinate or marginal masculinities to get a clearer sense of the mechanisms at work. Do the men that occupy these positions in the hegemonic structure in one situation move towards dominant or complicit status in another, for example in the switch between work and the home? What would happen to the structure of gender relations if one of those 'goody-goody' YMCA lads entered a working-class pub? As Griffin argues, a more precise historiography of masculinity pays attention to these overlapping dynamics of power. It would seek to make sense not only of the ways in which men accrue certain forms of capital

over time to secure masculine identity, but might also examine how men adapt the performances of their identity according to the many different social configurations they might encounter in the course of daily life.

Thirdly, the ontological critique that Griffin outlines is especially important to a historiography of performed masculinities. He asks "where are the men performing hegemonic masculinity?" (Griffin, 2018: 7.) This is to track the precise relationship between the "ideals, fantasies and desires" that drove masculine identity and the actual practices of men 'in the real world' at a given historical moment. As such, Griffin questions whether a theory of hegemony can ever quite account for this complex interplay. Quoting Connell's earlier work, he writes that

> the bearers of hegemonic masculinity are frequently fantasy figures. Consequently the defence of hegemonic masculinity rests on a "fairly convincing corporate display of masculinity" by the social elites rather than the ability of individuals to live up to the ideal. This idea deserves closer scrutiny because it means that whereas masculinities identified as complicit, subordinate and marginal are defined by sets of practices performed by identifiable groups of men, hegemonic masculinity is not: it may be a configuration of practice that no-one need practise.
>
> (Griffin, 2018: 7)

This passage echoes the core idea of Horrocks' writing on crisis. In this view, masculinity is an always-evasive social identity: every-day performances of masculinity are more likely to be characterised by failures to meet that ideal than successes. Griffin argues that Connell's

concept is therefore better deployed to purely cultural histories of gender in that they deal primarily with the world of ideals and myths, and less adequate in tracking how these ideals play out in the social domain through conformity or resistance. In his article he subsequently poses the question "is the history of masculinity to be the history of representations or practices?" (Griffin, 2018: 7.)

I argue that theatre and performance history is uniquely placed to address this provocation. The case studies selected here – and this may apply to live performance practices in general – were public displays that necessarily involved 'actual men' labouring to represent these "ideals, fantasies and desires". Unlike other artistic media such as film, photography or fine art, theatre and live performance events are simultaneously social practices *and* artistic interpretations that unfold in real time in the presence of an audience. They therefore occupy *both* the domains that Griffin describes at the exact moment of their iteration. For example, the local Boys' Brigade demonstrations explored in Chapter Five were constructed around the hegemonic fantasy of the Christian soldier, with the community's future men enacting the scripts and rituals of military discipline through their developing bodies. However, these performances were still embedded in a web of social and interpersonal relationships: the Boys' Brigade sought to direct boys towards "habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-Respect" as a corrective to the social "male youth problem" (Hendrick, 1990.) Furthermore, these boys would perform such repertoires in front of families, friends and other members of the community. As Stephen Humphries has shown in his oral histories of working-class childhood during the period, these performances would sometimes attract derision in the form of chanting or even stone-throwing when taken out to the street (Humphries, 1986: 134-135.) To answer Griffin's provocation, then, live performance is situated at the juncture of the

real and the imagined: it is precisely representational practice, or in other words, it is a social practice that qualifies and disseminates representations. In this way, hegemonic masculinity remains a productive analytical model for a study of this kind. Alongside the modifications that Griffin proposes, we are able to construct rich and multi-dimensional histories of the lives of the performing men and boys described here, making sense of the interplay between pervasive cultural myths on-stage and their effects on the social world off-stage.

Navigating the South West of England

In dialogue with these core theoretical positions, it is important to outline how I am defining the 'South West of England' for this study. The material used and case studies explored throughout will refer to live cultural practices that took place in, or involved performers originating from, Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Wiltshire, with smaller references to the neighbouring Gloucestershire and Dorset. At the turn of the twentieth century these counties were tightly interconnected with each other and with the rest of the country as a result of the expanded Great Western Railway. However, they nevertheless persisted with established boundaries for the purposes of administrative or political demarcation. These borders are meaningful insofar as they help to track the uneven distribution of capital and resources across the region, with the cities regularly absorbing workforces from surrounding towns and cities. The more sustained and lucrative engagements in the early part of Carl Fredricks' career, for example, would be on the large variety stages in Bristol and Bath, with less compensation at small pavilions in nearby settlements such as Frome or Kempsford. In some cases, these borders defined the micro-cultures of neighbouring counties and could be the source of some intense and long-lasting

animosity. The key example of this in the study is in Chapter Three where the respective wrestling traditions of Devon and Cornwall are explored. A methodological benefit of identifying source material referring to a limited yet still comprehensive geographical area is to establish the convergences and divergences of practices between different locales in the South West. To extend the metaphor of 're-establishment' outlined in the previous section, this principle might also reveal how these locales attempted to reclaim their tightly-held civic identities at a moment when the persistent movement of populations in and beyond the region could potentially undermine local customs and traditions.

A common feature of the counties listed above is that none at their most 'inland' point are more than eighty miles away from the 630-mile South West Coast Path that stretches from Minehead in Somerset, winding round via the Cornish and Jurassic Coasts to Poole in Dorset[3]. This coastal proximity is significant to the South West's imaginative geography as many of its settlements were on the frontline of national defence and one of the country's first ports of call for international traders, notably so in the latter parts of the nineteenth century. The many fortifications that made up the Plymouth Coast Defences, formed through a large building programme commissioned by Prime Minister Lord Palmerston in 1860, maintained their reputation well into the twentieth century as key military presences on the South West coast to deter naval attacks from the continent. At one point the area formed a training site for the 2,600 men of the Devon Voluntary Infantry Brigade in the years leading up to the Great War[4]. Bristol, of course, had an extensive history of transatlantic trade, and its importing of timber

[3] "Heritage – Discover Our Local Heritage", South West Coast web site, [https://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/about-coast-path/heritage-walks/] , accessed 27th June, 2017.

[4] "The Devon Volunteers – Final Manoeuvres – Visit of Sir John Leach", *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, Saturday August 10th, 1907, pg. 6.

at the nearby Portishead dock was regarded as necessary to an expanding and increasingly affluent city in the early parts of the twentieth century[5]. The South West coast's historic relationship with the Canadian provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador was important to the maintenance of transatlantic maritime trade. Ongoing disputes between the United States and Canada regarding fishing waters had potential knock-on effects for the provision of food for the region, and these developments were tracked closely by the local press[6]. Alongside this geographical advantage and its recognition as a hub of international trade, the South West remained prominent in the farming and agricultural sectors, particularly in comparison with other regions in the country. According to the official report on the 1911 census, males aged 10 and above that were engaged in agricultural employment numbered around 16% in Devon, 20% in Somerset and 23% in Wiltshire, well above the 8% average recorded for England and Wales as a whole (1911 Census of England and Wales, 1917: 116.) These practical notions of defence, industry and trade were critical to the South West of England's prominent role in the socio-economic health of the country at large, and indeed to the building of masculine identities in the region.

However, whilst economics and trade have inevitable effects on the construction of civic pride, emotional and interpersonal experiences of 'place' must also be considered. This is to suggest that individual attachments to a locality might have an impact on social behaviour and self-constitution of one's identity. Increased ease of movement between rural and urban environments at the turn of the twentieth century captured the imaginations of young people in and around the South West, forging new labour masculinities that moved

[5] "Timber Trade and Portishead Dock", *Western Daily Press*, Saturday 7th February, 1903, pg. 5.
[6] "Newfoundland Fisheries – The Question of Arbitration", *Western Daily Press,* Tuesday July 16th, 1907, pg. 8.

beyond older configurations associated with the region, such as those found in agriculture. Reflecting on his experiences as a seaman during the Great War, West Country veteran Maurice Symes describes an adolescent disillusionment with the Somerset country life he was born into in 1896. He moved to Bristol in 1914 with the expectation of less monotonous employment and more favourable social opportunities: he declared concisely in his interview "I was born on a farm but not born a farmer". During his teenage years, he took numerous delivery jobs in Bristol before enlisting in the Somerset Light Infantry in 1915.[7]

Symes' story underlines how place had a prominent role to play in the development of subjectivities and how circumstances of birth might have been at odds with an individual's desires and self-perception. This interplay between idealised visions and material circumstances would be enhanced in a context of increased mobility between localities, calling into question any fixed notion of 'place'. Citing social geographer Tim Cresswell, the theatre historian Jo Robinson suggests in her monograph *Theatre & the Rural* (2016) that

> place is no longer seen as simply an area marked by coordinates on a map or […] by the sparsity of population numbers or land-use statistics. Instead, it should be understood as 'constituted through reiterative social practice' through what is done in that place and, I would add, through what is said, written and performed about and within that place.
>
> (Robinson, 2016: 13)

[7] Maurice Symes, interviewed by Jan R Stovold, 1986, Imperial War Museum, London, 9455.

The 'reiterative' concept of place is a useful way to conceptualise the South West of England at the turn of the twentieth century. People had increased license to enact and define their *own* places and identities through developing consumer markets and leisure opportunities, gradually dissolving any division between respective lived experiences in the village, the town, and the city. This performative as opposed to explicitly geographical notion of place necessarily developed (or at the very least problematised) the constitution of masculine identity, and the case studies that follow reflect this.

South West Performance Cultures

Considering the South West as both the locus of vital infrastructure and as a 'reiterative social practice' connected to lived experience provides an interesting context through which to read the region's performance cultures at the turn of the twentieth century. Modernised transport and greater commercial opportunity had considerable influence on the way in which all kinds of live performance events were produced, marketed and distributed, from the amateur sporting events of Chapter One to the South West tour of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* in 1902 explored as part of Chapter Five. These developing operational conditions assisted Britain's thriving tradition of touring entertainments, facilitating an exchange of theatrical repertoires across a range of locations and geographical levels. Whilst this may have allowed talent from the 'provinces' to emerge, it also provided opportunities for London-based companies to expand their own audience bases and entrench their influence on performance cultures around the country. Much of the critical focus on live cultural practices at the turn of the twentieth century has therefore been on London, especially when it comes to the commercial 'actor's theatre'. Viv Gardner (2004) and Claire Cochrane (2011) have each

made valuable contributions to address this imbalance with the latter's work on the relationship between empire and the 'topography of theatre in 1900' particularly comprehensive. In terms of the South West, despite a number of micro-histories dedicated to single locations or buildings (see Barker, 1973; Board, 1925; Carleton, 1983; Hallett, 2000; Shorney, 2015) there is still not an established overview of (or synthesis between) the region's cultural practices at either amateur or professional levels during this period, and even less so outside the largest settlements of Bristol, Plymouth and Exeter.

Gardner's chapter "Provincial Stages, 1900-1934: Touring and Early Repertory Theatre" argues that these practices laid the foundations for the repertory system that would emerge in the 1920s (see Rowell and Jackson, 1984). It addresses a gap in theatre historiography where practices originating in and moving between regional cities at this time had been largely overlooked (Gardner, 2004:61.) Significantly, Gardner points out a watershed moment in the British theatre industry where labour movements and civil unrest in the cities inspired moves towards greater participation of the working class in the creation and performance of new dramatic works. Gardner specifically cites the case of Annie Horniman, manageress of the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester from 1908, who invited the submission of new plays from working-class authors that could more authentically portray the struggles of the average Lancashire populace. Pointedly, these playwrights were encouraged not to write "about countesses and duchesses and society existing in the imagination, but about their friends and enemies – about real life" (2004:71).

This targeted callout to under-represented voices was certainly novel for the time and presented a challenge to the administrative and representative dominance of social elites. It reflects what Joseph Donohoe has identified as the "newer, moral realism that prizes

truthfulness even at the cost of pleasantness of subject or tidiness of dramatic construction" (Donohoe, 1996:15) and would in his view become a defining characteristic of the progressing – and to some extent *progressive* – Edwardian stage. However, there appears to be no equivalent of working-class participation in the South West commercial theatre industries before 1914 – at least, not in key creative or managerial roles. Though there is some evidence of the growing self-sufficiency of the region's main commercial theatres in terms of producing and marketing in-house work, particularly during pantomime season[8], their overall success still relied quite heavily on the lucrative engagements of London's star actors and companies. This is exemplified by Henry Irving's respective visits to the Prince's Theatre in Bristol in 1894 and 1902, each time presenting his signature double bill of *A Story of Waterloo* and *The Bells*[9].

In contrast to these practices in the 'legitimate theatre', commercial entertainment enterprises in the region regularly cited the marvel of modernising society in their marketing to audiences from across the economic classes, offering up-to-date acts and repertoires in line with shifting popular tastes. High-capacity performance venues in the region, such as the Livermore Brothers' People's Palaces in Bristol and Plymouth, strove to integrate new stagecraft technologies into their buildings and produce spectacular theatrical stunts to stimulate popular interest.[10] The efforts of theatrical managers to book the most attractive acts and utilise the latest technological 'crazes' was a core aspect of local market competition, most prominently in Bristol. Managed by music hall entrepreneur Oswald Stoll, the Bristol

[8] *Prince's Theatre scrapbook of press cuttings 1902- c.1912,* University of Bristol Theatre Collection, VAR/000002.

[9] It is important to read Irving's national (and transatlantic) touring of his well-established repertoire around 1900 in the context of his financial troubles, as Tracy C Davis meticulously outlines in *The Economics of the British Stage 1800-1914* (2000.)

[10] Programme – Variety at Livermore's People's Palace, February 1893 – August 1902, University of Bristol Theatre Collection, PR/4017-4023.

Hippodrome opened in 1912 on St Augustine's Parade, one of the key commercial thoroughfares in the city that stood around two hundred yards from the People's Palace. As part of its focus on state-of-the-art innovations, the venue installed a water tank underneath the stage and allowed for the incorporation of visual effects seldom seen in variety entertainment before. The Edwardian theatre critic F. G. H Macrae's article in *The Stage Yearbook 1916* illustrates the general impression such breakthroughs in stagecraft made, capturing the prevailing excitement of the time:

> The music-hall of to-day commands serious consideration from the engineering world. The advancement it has made in mechanical equipment permits of productions being presented to the public which, in olden times, would have been considered impossible. Realism in olden times depended on imitations such as transparencies for waterfalls, etc.; realism of to-day is presented in its literal meaning. To attain this, modern machinery is now utilised to the best advantage, and the Bristol Hippodrome presents one of the finest illustrations of a modern music-hall equipped with a mechanical installation that assist the stage manager to the last degree […] Ability and enterprise are the keynotes of such an attainment, and Mr Oswald Stoll is to be congratulated on this fine building.
>
> (Macrae, 1916: 37)

Some of the appealing features of this brand-new machinery and mechanical equipment included the possibility of impressively realistic 'scenes of river life' complete with punts and canoes, and even the opportunity to accommodate diving animals (1916:37).

Whilst less expansive acts such as singers, comedians and magicians frequented variety entertainment bills, the new technologies available to theatre managers and companies in the region allowed them to push the boundaries of what was possible. In Berman's terms, the popular theatre would continue to be received as "an environment that [promised] adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world" (Berman, 1982: 15.) As a result, new 'scopic markets' could be forged that attempted to capitalise on the human capacity to 'look' or even 'stare'. For instance, in the light of commercial competition in the region and the market imperative of 'up-to-dateness', there was an increased interplay between stages of popular entertainment and burgeoning cinematographic innovations. Playbills from key live entertainment venues, such as this example at the Theatre Royal Exeter from approximately the late 1890s, foregrounded ways in which science and entertainment were interweaved to create a novel spectacle:

> THE CINEMATESCOPE [OR CELEBRATED ANIMATED PHOTOGRAPHS]. The Latest London Scientific Craze. Selections from nearly 100 pictures, which will be varied at each performance. Several Coloured Pictures will also be exhibited. The same as being shown at the Alhambra Theatre, London.[11]

The Poole's Myriorama, discussed extensively in Chapter Four, would also frequently adapt their bills in accordance with developing technologies and shifting historical events. Operating out of their studios in Malmesbury in North Wiltshire[12], their 'Boer War' entertainments would integrate cinematographic pictures of key milestones in the conflict to

[11] Playbill advertising variety performance at Exeter Theatre Royal, c.1898, Devon Heritage Centre, 8246.

[12] "Wanted, Scenic Artist", *The Era,* March 17th, 1900, pg. 24.

realise their 'amusement with instruction' principle. Their typically unrestrained marketing copy would highlight these technologies during the Welsh leg of their tour in 1900, promising "prominent popular preponderant panorama. Perpetually presenting predominating panstereoramas and performances par excellence".[13]

However, whilst these new 'scientific crazes' would become integrated into live entertainments in the form of new stagecraft – or, in the case of cinema, as new attractions in themselves - there was still a taste for *live* embodied spectacles across a range of performance contexts. Circus, sport, music-hall and drama would cross-pollinate to create new modes of expression to suit the whims of the popular market, with the 'wrestling craze' of Chapter Three an unusual hybrid of all four of those forms. In the context of scientific innovation and cross-media experimentation, live entertainment stages would become crucial outlets for the presentation of male bodies, framing them as visual marvels in their own rights. As some of the case studies here explore, scientific discourses on public health would implicate men's bodies in the modern framework of ambition and spectacle, altering the ways in which embodied masculinities were mediated and received. Consequently, scopic regimes of live performance were constructed through meticulously selected theatrical properties such as costume or stage furniture, and they focussed the gaze in a predetermined way, often as an expression of an ideological position. Eugen Sandow, whose commercial performance practices in Bristol form the focus of Chapter Two, presented his body through all kinds of representational media during the period including in early kinetoscopes, still photography, sculpture and the stage. However, as the chapter will show, the idealised muscularity of

[13] "Albert Hall Swansea", *South West Daily News,* January 5th, 1900, pg. 1.

Sandow's body presented through live media invited a multiplicity of readings, from the scientific gaze that supported his campaign of physical 'culture' to homoerotic ways of looking that risked flouting norms of decency.

Whilst the modernising stage heralded new developments in stagecraft that could present visions of the body and masculinity in novel ways, these practices invited a range of gazes that could threaten the integrity of those visions. This view of 'representational excess' is in line with Peggy Phelan's observation that a representation "always conveys more than it intends" (Phelan, 1993: 2.) At the turn of the twentieth century, no matter how careful organising agents were in displaying their optimal myths or ideals of masculinity through live performances, these displays were not only haunted by the prospect of failure as discussed in the previous section. The "liquefying tendencies" of modern technologies and mindsets also subjected the showing-doing body to readings that diverged from – or even actively resisted – those supposedly coherent images of man.

In summary, this study seeks to develop a multivalent historical account of live performance at the turn of the twentieth century by placing limits on the geographical focus. By identifying source material originating in or referring specifically to the South West of England, we can start to establish a richer sense of the range of locations in which live performance might have been produced in Britain: from variety halls to town-centre parks, and from the purpose-built theatres to the many seaside resorts that the region boasted. The study does not claim to identify an entirely independent performance culture in the region, or a signature South West 'style'. In fact, each of the case studies selected for this investigation were true to the form of modernity in that they necessarily resisted neat categorisation. This makes a focussed analysis of the many collisions of form, audiences and places of performance

a valuable contribution to the historiography of turn-of-the-century British theatre and performance, especially given this study's attention to practices that took place outside the metropolis.

Seemingly self-evident knowledges such as 'place' were themselves called into question in a context of increased cross-community exchange, and perhaps especially so in the South West of England given its connection to international trading networks, prominent standing in matters of military defence and reputation as a desirable holiday-making location. Whilst clearly demarcated boundaries between counties, towns and villages were defined for the purposes of municipal administration, place is also to be considered as a reiterative social practice that is organised around interpersonal relationships and emotional attachments, perhaps best encapsulated in the term 'civic pride'. Ultimately, this study reads each of its key subjects – 'masculinity', 'live performance', and 'South West England' – as configurations of practice, or in other words as forms of 'doing'. To paraphrase Berman, at a historical moment of rapid modernisation in which previously solid knowledges - including gender, cultural forms and geographical identity – were 'melting into air', it is productive to consider examples in which these three constructs were put into dialogue with one another in order to ward off the 'liquefying effects' of modern existence. In the chapters that follow, I consider in turn how each performance context sought to (re)-establish coherent ideas about maleness and masculinity in the face of – and as a remedy to - the many interlocking crises that haunted South West communities at the turn of the twentieth century. These counter-modern attempts at coherence, however, were built on an essential condition of failure.

ONE

Amateur Sport and the Performance of Equilibrium

- Fig 1.1 – Colour poster advertising Tiverton Amateur Athletic Sports on Sept 5th, 1907.[14]

[14] Posters advertising obstacle races, etc. at Tiverton Athletic Ground, September 5th 1907, Devon Archives and Local Studies, R4/1/0/X/1/7.

On September 15th, 1881, the first of Tiverton's annual amateur athletic meetings took place on the town's Cricket Field, the result of a conversation between local clubs for football, cricket and cycling. Through this they formed the Tiverton Amateur Athletic Association[15] following "zealous" support from community dignitaries including military veterans, councillors and the Member of Parliament for Tiverton Sir John Heathcote-Amory who acted as President of the organisation. The inaugural event attracted around 1,400 spectators and a number of amateur runners and cyclists from across the country[16]. These were mostly derived from Tiverton and other Devonian towns such as Topsham, Exeter and Barnstaple, but there were also athletes who made the journey from Croydon and Birmingham, perhaps owing to the event's advertisement in London-based magazine *Sporting Life*[17]. Nine of the sixteen events were open to all entrants, with the remainder strictly limited to men belonging to local clubs, to "residents of the borough", or to boys under sixteen. The organisers and participants were exclusively male, with the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette's* only reference to women's involvement being their role as prizegivers.[18]

The meeting adopted a format that would be carried forward in subsequent years. The events consisted of short- to middle distance running, bicycle races and jumping events, typically concluding with a less serious sack race[19]. To offer a well-rounded day of entertainment for paying spectators, the Association engaged the services of a local military band, whose repertoire leant some patriotic gusto to a spectacle that was embedded within -

[15] "Tiverton Amateur Athletic Meeting", *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegram,* September 19th, 1881, n.p.
[16] "Tiverton Amateur Athletic Meeting", *Western Times,* September 17th, 1881.
[17] "Tiverton Devon – The Amateur Athletic Sports", *Sporting Life,* August 20th, 1881, pg. 1.
[18] "Tiverton Amateur Athletic Meeting", *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegram,* September 19th, 1881, n.p.
[19] "Tiverton Amateur Athletic Meeting", *Western Times,* September 17th, 1881.

and largely for - the local community. Finally, the prizes on offer for each of the sixteen events had a total value of £90, indicating a high level of sponsorship from those of the upper economic classes. These mostly came in the form of small cash prizes of between £1 and £3, but there were also trophies to be won, including a "£5 and 5s silver cup" awarded to the winners of the bicycle races and "an exceedingly pretty claret jug" donated by a member of the organising committee.[20]

Twenty-six years after its inaugural event, the annual sports had retained its prestige, and continued to engage both the local community and visitors from outside. The 1907 iteration was able to offer discounted return journeys on the main line between Taunton and Newton Abbot, demonstrating that the Association had contacts within the commercial departments of the Great Western Railway and other spheres of municipal influence[21]. The committee retained much of the foot and cycle races for the programme as well as the engagement of a Voluntary Battalion band [see Fig. 1.1] Perhaps given the benefit of a larger venue – by 1907, the sports had moved to the Tiverton Athletic Ground – the programme added a three-quarter mile steeplechase and an obstacle course, which involved a raised grass bank, a water jump and costume change midway through. The winner of the 1905 race was disqualified after being adjudged to have not sufficiently dressed himself in the costume[22]. Whilst the formal races were still conducted under appropriate Amateur Athletic Association and National Cyclists' Union regulations, the transfer of the event to a larger capacity setting and the incorporation of 'fun runs' were indicative of a scheme of municipal improvement

[20] Ibid.

[21] Poster advertising Tiverton Amateur Athletic Sports, September 5th 1907, Devon Archives and Local Studies, R4/1/0/X/1/8.

[22] "Tiverton Athletic Festival – A Capital Programme", *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette,* September 8th, 1905, pg. 16.

and community-building. In other words, the serious business of athletic sport at a site specifically designated for the purpose was counterbalanced with family-friendly light entertainment.

The publicity material for the 1907 event, especially the poster that opens this chapter, appear aimed towards a young professional class. It offers a glimpse into local amateur sports as not only largely homosocial arena where male status was shaped and displayed through physical dexterity and the awarding of sophisticated trophies, but also as a form of entertainment in its own right. The youthful men depicted in the illustration [see Fig 1.1] embody a set of liberalist values around self-care, self-sufficiency and self-control. Their bodies petrified mid-action display toned legs, pectorals and abdominal muscles to retain an idealised triangular shape, depicting the fruits of regular and goal-directed physical exercise. Importantly, however, these embodied representations stopped short of the showy muscularity propagated by fitness-showmen, who would make frequent appearances at the region's variety halls from the 1890s onwards (though predominantly in urban settlements, as Chapter Two will explore.) Their neat hair and clean-shaven faces elicit ongoing youth and a meticulously observed pride in appearance, keeping up a well-nourished and fit body that was prepared for all domains of a 'respectable' young man's life, be it on the sporting field or in the potentially energy-sapping environments of office work. As Richard Holt writes

> the new male body, advocated by doctors and the proponents of amateur sport alike, was a neo-classical norm of human proportion, balancing height, weight, muscle development and mobility. The ideal athlete was neither too small, too thin nor too fat.
>
> (Holt, 2006 : 361)

- Fig. 1.2 – The Vatican Discobolus, a 2nd-century A.D copy of a bronze original by Myron, 460 BC.[23]

[23] Author's own collection (the photograph, not the statue…)

This interest in neoclassical constructions of embodied masculinity reflected a prevailing view that body and mind were interdependent, emulating the Greek ideal of the *kouros*, a classical archetype of a youthful male body trained away from excess or decadence (Buchbinder, 2013: 127-130.) The depiction of young men running and vaulting in the Tiverton picture provides a sense of *rhythmos* akin to that found in the various versions of the Discobolus statue [see Fig 1.2] Art historian Alex Potts has shown that the Classical Greek ideal of "quiet strength" or "calm grandeur" expressed in nude male sculpture became a desirable model of male citizenship in long-nineteenth-century elite culture, including in Britain (Potts, 1994: 1; Potts, 2007: 169-171.)

The poster framed the fit, active male body as the key visual selling-point of the amateur sports, foregrounding imagery that encouraged other young men to emulate this carefully modulated ideal. More generally, the event invited the wider populace to engage with a male-predominating public display. This element of competitive male spectacle is nevertheless tempered by the offer of entertainment. There is room on the poster for dashes of humour, with a young man in the bottom-right corner rendered torso-less as he negotiates a barrel during the promised obstacle race [see Fig. 1.1.] Indeed, the charge for tickets to the sports seems to distinguish the practice from the conventional village fete or flower show and towards a logic of commercialised pleasure-seeking. The case of Tiverton Amateur Athletic Sports offers insight into the role of live performance events in directing public opinion and building consensus, arranging male participation around certain values considered desirable to the event's organising agents. In this case, these values were self-determination and the acquisition of commodity to advance social respectability.

This first chapter explores the role of amateur sport in constructing masculinities in the South West at the turn of the twentieth century and how the organisational structures of "rational recreation" at the time were in dialogue with an overall trend of masculine spectacle in the region. Sport here is read in its public-facing capacity; as a live, embodied cultural practice that revealed masculinity as a matter of "showing-doing", in performance scholar Richard Schechner's succinct terms (Schechner, 2017: 28). In the two contexts discussed here – firstly the matches of the sporting teams of local YMCAs and secondly the annual meets of regional iterations of the Amateur Athletic Association - there was a formally defined demarcation between organising agents, participants and witnesses to generate a 'useful' cultural space where norms of masculinity could be practised for public consideration. More specifically, it reveals how amateur sport presented a coherent stereotype of masculinity, where physical proportionality was regarded in harmonious synergy with both a man's spiritual investment and his dedication to his profession. Each of these factors mutually benefitted the others in a triangular, sufficiently-balanced model of manliness that I refer to here as 'equilibrium'. The theory that a boy or man's participation in sport was regarded as beneficial to all aspects of his personal and professional development pervades the available source material, including in newspaper reports, association periodicals and administrative log-books.

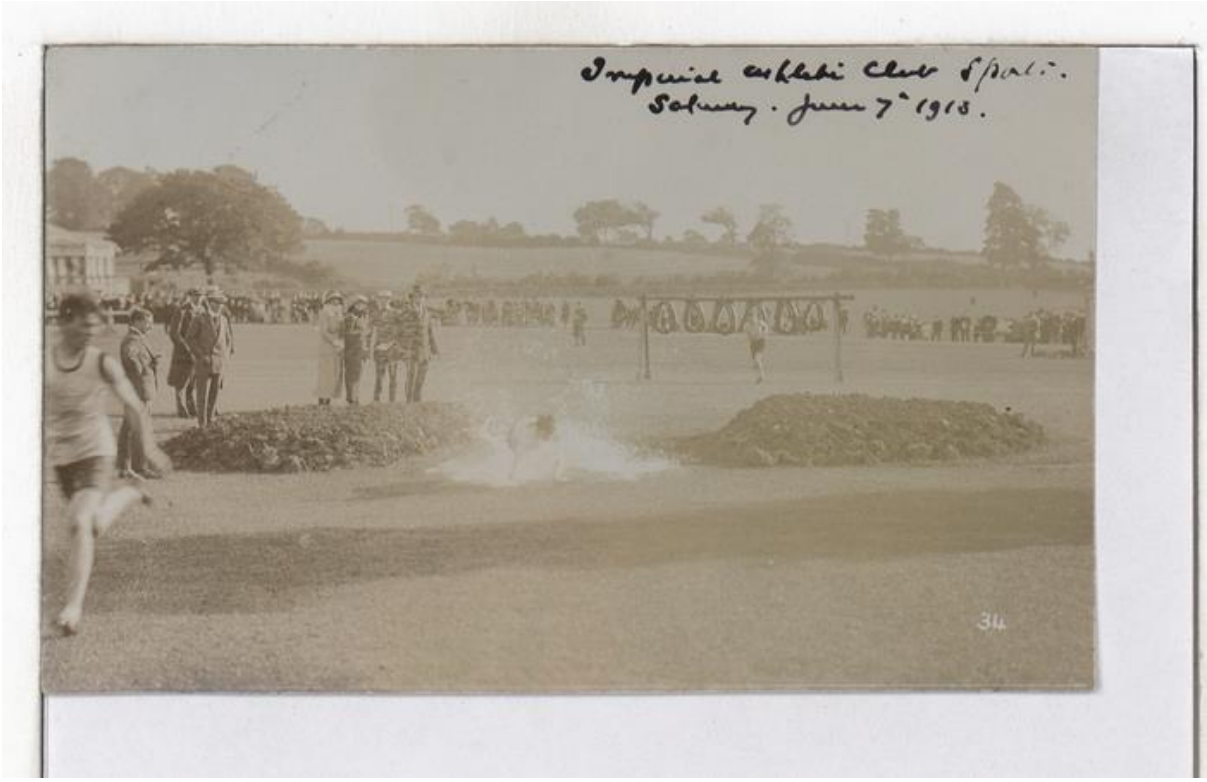
'Equilibrium' is modified from Holt's discussion of the relationship between regular physical exercise and the evolving perception of the ideal (middle-class) male body in the late nineteenth century. Holt writes that

> the Victorian era saw the triumph of the well-proportioned body over earlier shapes and sizes of men […] Professional sportsmen continued

> to have specialized bodies and were not necessarily physical bodies for the rest of humanity. The social elite who pioneered modern sports believed in a neo-classical norm of human proportion, balancing height, weight, muscle development and mobility.
>
> (Holt, 2006: 363)

Holt's focus is on the interrelated areas of work, health and style, and the way in which each of these domains were modulated to achieve harmonious balance "between the different elements of the human anatomy and the inner and outer self" (Holt, 2006 : 361.) Amateur sporting activities figured strongly in this new mode of middle-class leisure, offering an antidote to the cramped, sedentary working conditions that were the norm for middle-class professionals. I use 'equilibrium' in this chapter, then, to refer to the proportionality that Holt describes, but I extend it further to include the moral, spiritual and intellectual balance that sport was seen to cultivate. Furthermore, a close focus on the specific conditions of those events reveal the importance of public exhibitions of masculinity to the communities in question, and why these exhibitions were produced to have such distinct dramaturgical features.

Equilibrium as *Mise-en-Scène*



- Fig 1.3 - Postcard depicting Imperial Athletic Club Sports in Knowle, Bristol, 1913.[24]

At the turn of the twentieth century, amateur sporting practices were one of a cluster of strategies on the part of elites to direct their powers and resources towards 'a contest for control' over leisure time. These schemes have been conceptualised as "rational recreation", a social movement that had developed from the Industrial Revolution and applied to a whole range of cultural activities including literature, live entertainments and sport. Referring specifically to the latter, the sociologist Alan Tomlinson writes that it reflects

> the view, common to the dominant classes and established elites in a variety of modernizing societies, that participation in certain sports

[24] Imperial Athletic Club Sports, early 1910s, Vaughan Collection, Bristol Archives, 43207/37/1/2.

> could create a disciplined and healthy labour force and general populace.
>
> (Tomlinson, 2010)

This guidance of recreational activity identified a link between individual personal development and the enrichment of communal space in towns and villages, with interventions designed to facilitate efforts towards improved public health. This included the foundation of public parks and recreation grounds, the establishment of youth organisations, and the local arrangement of events aimed at enhancing intellectual and spiritual literacy such as bible classes or penny readings. This mode of control significantly impacted amateur sport insofar as it signalled a more explicit understanding of physical exercise as both a social and moral good.

Due to the extensive efforts to control leisure at the time - with its connotations of a paternalistic relationship between elites and masses - it is important to acknowledge the complexities of agency in those activities. It is notable that groups of men who held positions of authority in South West communities, such as local councillors or the clergy, would also sit on the committees for local branches of the YMCA and the AAA. For example, this close concentration of administrative power was certainly apparent in the case of Taunton, the details of which are explored later in the chapter. What was taken for 'improvement' was often contingent on competing visions of what the ideal social environment looked like, revealing tensions between the rationalising agents and the groups of people they sought to 'improve' or 'uplift'. Most often these tensions emerged from the fraught and mutually sceptical relationship between economic classes. The economist and social historian H.E Meller in *Leisure and the Changing City, 1870-1914* (1976) tracks the relationship between the

transforming urban environment and the rationalising intentions of those who sat in local government. Meller uses the case study of Bristol to explore how a small yet influential organisational base sought to intervene on the leisure time of the city's population. Deploying the useful term "governing elite" to describe such a group, Meller identifies how the Liberal Nonconformist wing of the city council advocated a programme of 'social citizenship' to be included in the council's activities, complementing (short of replacing) the existing social and philanthropic work taking place in the city (Meller, 1976: 73.) Social citizenship in this context was closely related to rational recreation, insofar as increased leisure time was seen to lead to well-rounded personal development and the invitation to voluntary action. The social historian Robert Snape also notes this Aristotelian distinction between 'eudemonic' leisure and 'hedonistic' amusement that heavily influenced the attitudes of Edwardian social reformists, suggesting that "education in the use of leisure in civilized pursuits and a socially constructive enjoyment of leisure were necessary to the well-being of the community" (Snape, 2018: 75). Therefore social citizenship involved a purposeful, selfless spending of leisure activity where the individual would invest his or her spare time in the service of others. If enough of the population could meet this standard of citizenship, this would hypothetically lead to a sense of a unified, commonly-felt urban community within the city, and at least in principle could transcend class boundaries. As Meller suggests

> suburban segregation tended to minimize contact between different social groups […] What was new in the development [of social improvement efforts] was the growing emphasis given to the need positively to attract people to organizations and institutions by offering them something more tangible than salvation in the next life; and the

> growing desire to foster communities and community spirit in both the poor areas and the rapidly growing new areas of the city.
>
> This latter concern for community unleashed new ideas on the desirability of developing social facilities in each district as an essential part in building up a local community. Further, the provision of facilities and the organization of activities provided a means of contact between rich and poor which contributed, in a more personal way than mere municipal facilities, to nurturing a wider concept of community, one that extended to the city itself.
>
> (Meller, 1976: 123)

The wider establishment of facilities such as parks, libraries and swimming baths in Bristol neighbourhoods were borne out of the efforts of the town council to together create an appropriately 'civilized' social environment, or what Meller calls "the practical, cultural dimension of what could be provided through 'social citizenship'" (1976: 99). However, Meller qualifies these schemes of cultural improvement by suggesting the self-contained, perhaps even self-serving, investments of the influential groups had little to do with overall public need, and ultimately involved little public consultation. This is reflected by a letter appearing in the *Western Daily Press* in 1903 in which a resident expressed their dismay at the selective approach taken by elected councillors towards the establishment of a large public park at the intersection of the Bristol neighbourhoods of Knowle, Brislington and Totterdown. The writer regarded a local park as a public necessity "for the health of the whole city"[25]; an

[25] "Correspondence – Proposed Park for Knowle and Brislington", *Western Daily Press*, January 30th, 1903, pg. 4.

application for such a park was turned down by the council in 1905 due to a "strict economy"[26]. Perhaps this letter-writer would have been even more dismayed when the Imperial Tobacco Company (formerly Wills) opened their Athletic Ground in Knowle two years later in 1905 [see Fig 1.3] that "provided […] between 20 and 30 acres for their employees, fitting it with dressing and refreshment rooms"[27]. Its cost of "around £10,000"[28] suggests that private capital would sometimes trump more inclusive community efforts. This might be interpreted as at odds with the Aristotleian ideal of social citizenship. Meller's conclusion is that the phenomenon of 'municipal pride' was (and, indeed, *is*) problematic as "one of the curious facts about the municipal provisions for leisure and pleasure was how little their development owed, in most instances, to popular demand" (1976: 97) and this problem could be exacerbated by conflicts of interest between the public and private spheres.

In the case studies that follow, I argue that exterior municipal spaces such as parks or sporting fields were scenographies of power constructed by community leaders to express their values and aspirations. As such, to extend the theatrical metaphor, the athletic events that these spaces hosted would render their users as core signifiers within a civic *mise-en-scène* where values of good health, respectability and forward-thinking were displayed in public. In these carefully designed dramaturgical worlds that framed the spectacle of athletic masculinity within the green beauty of public parks or purpose-built sporting grounds, those circuits of local power had a medium through which to promote community engagement and self-improvement, regarding these events as the enaction of an ongoing investment in the

[26] "Bristol in 1905 Part II: The City Council and its Work – Parks, Baths and Libraries", *Western Daily Press*, December 29th, 1905, pg. 5.
[27] Ibid.
[28] "Local Happenings of the Week and Facts of Interest", *The Horfield and Bishopston Record*, November 5th 1905, pg. 3.

local prosperity. However, as I will show, this display was fundamentally gendered. Sporting activities were propagated as "the celebration and buttressing of patriarchal (and class) power" (Kidd, 2013: 554) limiting pretensions to "social citizenship" to a largely male domain.

[REDACTED DUE TO PERMISSIONS ISSUE]

- Fig. 1.4 - Photograph of Taunton YMCA AFC, Season 1899-1900[29]

[29] Photos of YMCA Sports Teams 1897 – 1937, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, DD/YMt/20.

'The Problem of the Boy': Redirecting Masculinity at the Taunton Y.M.C.A

Following Meller's observations on the various projects of municipal improvement in urban Bristol, the Somerset town of Taunton offers an example of how these governing practices were realised at a smaller geographical scale. An article published in the *Somerset Gazette* in January 1902 – and importantly, appended in the minute books of the local Young Men's Christian Association - described the significant investment made in the town's infrastructure in the preceding few years. The writer tracked the establishment or development of civic institutions in the area to enrich recreational opportunities for the local populace, commenting that

> from a municipal standpoint Taunton may undoubtedly be classified as a go-ahead and up-to-date borough, and any stranger who would be at the trouble of reading the history of the town during the past quarter of a century would be bound to endorse this statement. The improvements which have been effected in street lighting, drainage, water supply, and flood prevention, the opening of our beautiful park, and the various recreation grounds, the introduction of electric trams, and the scheme now under consideration for the erection of a town-hall, free library and art schools, together with the suggested swimming baths, and a new bridge over the Tone – all these go to prove that the town is in a thriving and progressive condition.[30]

[30] Newspaper clipping appended in *Taunton YMCA minutes, 1901 – 1925,* Somerset Archives and Local Studies, DD/YMt/3.

With significant investment in municipal development, including a £5,000 donation from industrialist Andrew Carnegie for the establishment of a free library[31] the town sought to build an environment for its citizens that could facilitate the improvement of health and cultural education. A key aspect of this development strategy was its sponsorship from the local amateur athletic club the Taunton Harriers, with members of the local council (including Mayors) either on their committee or in attendance by special invitation at their prestigious - and exclusively male - annual dinners[32]. Matters discussed at these dinners reflected the synergistic equilibrium model introduced above. The town's church leaders gave speeches claiming that "no place more than Taunton did the clergy take a greater interest in athletics", with the President of the Harriers Dr. H.T. Rutherford (M.D) asking the councillors present to consider the establishment of a gymnasium "to improve the appearance of many of the young men in the town […] who now wasted their time lounging about the streets"[33]. This suggests that the administration of these improvement schemes appeared to be concentrated within a select group of individuals who had substantial influence on the health, spirituality and leisure prospects of the town. Further still - and characteristic of a culture of equilibrium - Dr Rutherford's remarks implied a perceived correlation between the fitness of the town's young men and the attractiveness of the municipal environment, with each working together towards a positive self-presentation of civic pride.

The link between the improvement strategies and the promotion of a synergistic model of manliness found its way across other recreational organisations, including the town's

[31] "Taunton Council – Two Important Municipal Schemes", *Western Times,* October 14th, 1903, pg. 4.
[32] "Taunton Harriers Athletic Club – Annual Dinner – Another Successful Gathering", *Taunton Courier,* February 1st, 1905, pg. 3.
[33] "Taunton Harriers Athletic Club – Annual Meeting", *Taunton Courier,* December 9th 1903, pg. 3.

branch of the Young Men's Christian Association. The Association had been an influential presence in the town since 1855, when it was convened on a perception that "there was no reason in the world that a Christian should not be as good a man of business as another man"[34]. By 1900, the branch had its own headquarters on St James' Street in the town centre, providing a library and a gymnasium on-site[35]. One of the key driving factors of these organisations was to 'harness' or 'direct' the perceived natural energy of teenage boys and young adult men towards constructive goals for both their future employment and their dedication to matters of religion. At Taunton, this latter aspect was front and centre in a good deal of its administrative material and correspondence, building on the Association's founding principles of muscular Christian ideals (see Hall, 1994.) For example, the minute book of the town's branch decried in 1902 that attendance at church was "chiefly of a feminine composition"[36]. As such, they made a conscious effort to adopt a compelling slogan (suggested by the Association at the national level) in an attempt to capture a masculine imagination. This was, rather unambiguously: "Endure Hardness as a Good Soldier of Christ"[37]. Whilst the use of the term 'soldier' clearly does not escape militaristic connotations, the YMCA appeared to use this term metaphorically, pitching their cause to boys and men by situating the soldier as a recognisable pinnacle of masculinity, even if what they actually *did* at the clubs was not directly as a means of training up soldiers. The combination of bible classes, lectures and debating events on a range of subjects including fine arts, science and the provision of swimming baths in Taunton[38], as well as the sports and games provided at the clubs, were not

[34] "Taunton Young Mens' Christian Association", *Taunton Courier,* October 31st, 1855, pg. 7.
[35] "Annual Meeting of the Taunton YMCA", *Taunton Courier,* January 31st, 1900, n.p.
[36] *Taunton YMCA minutes, 1901 – 1925,* Somerset Archives and Local Studies, DD/YMt/3.
[37] Ibid.
[38] "Taunton Y.M.C.A Debating Society – The Baths for the Town Promised Shortly", *Taunton Courier*, November 22nd 1905, pg. 3.

geared towards a militaristic form of nationalism. Instead, the more direct concern was with promoting a set of skills that covered all the key bases of diplomacy, spirituality, and physical health. By directing their social behaviours towards these ends, young men could exemplify core values of Christian respectable manhood to their communities not only in their everyday social behaviours at work or in church yet also, as the following examples will show, through their displays in the passionate ideological frameworks of sport.

The concern that the participation of boys and young men in their local church communities was on the wane became linked to their future career prospects. Their absence in the congregation was perceived to compromise the town's burgeoning reputation as it had been (self-)described in the local press. In some of their literature, the associations felt that part of the role of the Church was to assist the moral and intellectual development of their young male parishioners, occasionally if perhaps unintentionally adopting a lexicon of control. Local journalists could justify these attempts at control through recreational organisations by purporting an ongoing 'problem of the boy', that

> was always an important one and is many times more so in these abnormal days. […] It has been well stated that work among boys is the key to the solution of many modern problems. In education, politics, social reform, and religion, the finest thought and most earnest efforts are being, and should be, devoted to their training. The Y.M.C.A is fully awake to this possibility of directing the superabundant energy and the

> overflowing vitality of the boys. It realises that their exuberant life is not to be repressed but guided.[39]

This supposedly innate 'male energy' was seen to require modulation; if unchecked, this energy could lead boys and young men into the world of vice and decadence, implied above as the root of the many 'social problems' of the early 1900s. For example, given the nationwide moral panic around cheap literature and its capturing of the young male imagination from the second half of the nineteenth century (see Boyd, 2003) periodicals were banned from the Taunton branch's reading rooms in 1902.[40]

On this basis, the Church and its youth organisations redirected these energies towards an 'equilibrium' model to maximise members' abilities in the key masculine spheres of business, sport and spirituality. Whilst these spheres were separated between work or educational life and recreation, they were regarded dynamically and synergistically, and the Association felt that the ideal outcome of their provisions was that those three spheres could be developed in harmony. At an annual meeting of the Taunton YMCA's committee and members, the branch secretary Mr Herbert Handel stressed that "The Association did not aspire to be merely a social club for young men, but it aimed at presenting in an attractive manner a full, symmetrical, perfect, Christian life", once again drawing on a notion of balance[41]. This is supported by an article in a supplementary monthly magazine called *Wee Notes* published in 1903, specifically printed for the Taunton YMCA readership:

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[39] *Taunton YMCA minutes, 1901 – 1925,* Somerset Archives and Local Studies, DD/YMt/3. Newspaper cutting of article "The Problem of the Boy" – undated and unsourced but approximately 1904, based on the chronological arrangement of the minute book.

[40] Ibid.

[41] "Annual Meeting of the Taunton YMCA", *Taunton Courier,* January 31st, 1900, n.p.

> What are the essentials to-day for success in business life? Honesty, rectitude, efficiency, smartness, thoroughness, and a good knowledge of your particular business. What are the vices that will surely undermine a business? Slovenliness, inefficiency, unpunctuality, ignorance about your particular business, and carelessness in the matter of £. s. d. Now apply these to the world of sport and with what result! Where would be a football or cricket team which ignored the virtues and let the vices grow upon them, like ivy on a tree? Why, gentlemen, they would be like the ivy "up a tree"![42]

In this writer's mind, good conduct in the workplace had a direct effect on performance on the football field (and vice versa.) This kind of language resonates with a preconception that boys had "the (imitation) habits of men, but with characters still unformed and with an excitability and quickness all their own", to use sociologist W.J. Braithwaite's turn of phrase (Braithwaite in Urwick, 1904 : 176, brackets in original.), and these habits were to be modulated by the Association through their range of rationalisation strategies.

However, it seems that the ascription of 'superabundant energy' and 'overflowing vitality' as inevitably and naturally male qualities was not straightforward at this time, as it homogenized all boys into one type based simply on their maleness, without accounting for important differences in geographical location or economic class. In other words, the perpetuation of a 'boyish' tendency to be active and energetic presupposes good health and

[42] Ibid.

an environment conducive to sustaining that level of health (i.e., in the clear air of the countryside as opposed to the typically crammed urban centres of Edwardian cities.) In fact, the annual membership fees of the local YMCAs suggest a relative degree of exclusivity. At Taunton the fees ranged from four shillings a year for 'Youths' to eight shillings a year for 'Seniors over 21' - not an especially extravagant expense in 1903, but the Associations may not have been prioritised for families on lower household incomes. Those outside the middle-to-upper class demographic may well have been put off by the patronising and moralising tone of the various newspaper correspondence on the clubs (and of course, this may also have been the view of those *within* such a demographic.) Nevertheless, it was on such essentialist terms that the Taunton YMCA was premised. The intervention of the 'governing elite' into the developing masculinities of their communities' lads through their youth organisations had to be based on a coherent and typical image of what a boy 'was' or 'should be', if only so the attempt to regulate and mould participants' bodies into a specific type could appear logical. In other words, the superabundant male energy in a community was certainly not be discouraged but instead *mined*. In this way the male body was framed as a natural resource of energy that could be channelled towards alleviating the most pressing local concerns. The activities of the clubs were predicated on improving physical and spiritual capacities that (so the theory went) would inspire future entrepreneurial excellence, the benefits of which were not just to be individually felt but also, hopefully, to the eventual credit of the whole community.

How, then, do we read the Taunton YMCA's 'body-resourcing' interventions in terms of performance, bearing in mind that municipal improvement efforts coincided with increased public interest in masculine spectacle? One of the ways in which this 'directing of

energy' was brought about was through the organisation of sporting events, actively and persistently encouraged by the Christian associations in the town. At the British Y.M.C.A's annual conference held in Bristol in 1903, in a speech entitled "The Physical Work of the Y.M.C.A" the president of the Taunton branch J.E.W Wakefield expressly advocated the role of team sports as a way of attaining the "highest standards of manhood", setting sports such as rowing, cricket and football apart from "selfish games" that prioritised individual glory. In this speech, he especially denounced the "nubbly muscular monstrosities" on show at the variety theatres and pictures at the time, suggesting that supple muscularity was sufficient without the need to indulge in spectacular excesses (more on these 'nubbly' performers in Chapters Two and Three.) The body training at the Taunton YMCA was similar to that exhibited at amateur athletic events in places like Tiverton – in Wakefield's words, "it was sufficient if the muscle were hard and supple, and ready to obey the behest of the mind". The aim was inner and outer harmony, in his view, and not "mere acrobatic feats" that served little purpose beyond visual gratification[43].

[43] "Mr. J.E.W. Wakefield on Physical Work", *Taunton Courier,* June 24th, 1903, pg. 5.

[REDACTED DUE TO PERMISSIONS ISSUE]

- Fig 1.5 - Team Photo of Taunton YMCA's football team for the 1897-1898 season.[44]

To this end, the Taunton branch provided a comprehensive programme of team sports for its members. Though football, rugby and cricket were naturally the most common sports participated in owing to their wider cultural popularity and significance to Britain's imperialist self-image (see McDevitt, 2004) at the Taunton branch there were also teams established for hockey, swimming and basketball as indicated by a series of souvenir team photos that date from as early as 1897 [see Figs 1.4 and 1.5]. On the back of the annual balance

[44] Photos of YMCA Sports Teams 1897 – 1937, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, DD/YMt/20.

booklets used by the Tiverton branch and circulated to Taunton was a small advertisement listing the "Advantages of YMCA", which included a whole range of activities that addressed a synergistic model of manhood and a special emphasis on sports and games. Provisions included a "Reading Room, Parlour, Billiards, Bagatelle, Punchball, Football, Chess, Draughts, Ping-Pong, Bible Classes, Prayer Meetings, 'Bright Services for Young Men', Social Evenings, Debates and Lectures"[45]. This offer of a wide range of activities and resources shows that YMCAs across the region were clearly invested in encouraging development across all domains and abilities, directing their members to attain high standards of manliness.

An interpretation of Wakefield's emphasis on team as opposed to individual sports in the Christian organisations is an importance placed on community spirit, constructing a sacrificial idea of masculinity that could be exhibited through physical activity and strategy, i.e., in the actual playing of the sport. Even in the table-tennis fixtures organised against other local associations, the efforts of the team as a whole were underlined. The Taunton Y.M.C.A's *Wee Notes* had this to say on a 1903 match against nearby Bridgwater, highlighting the essentially homosocial enterprise of the Association particularly when it came to young married men:

> Bravo, Taunton! Bravo, Goodland! Revenge is sweet. Thus did the most exciting ping-pong match that our team has ever played end. Those who stayed to see the finish of the match with Bridgwater on March 4th and who braved being scolded by their better half for coming home late, were amply repaid for their trouble by witnessing a fierce and

[45] Minute Book, Tiverton Young Men's Christian Association 1906 – 1914, Devon Archives and Local Studies, 7344F [uncatalogued collection].

> brilliant struggle for supremacy, out of which our men emerged crowned with victory, having 18 games to their credit to Bridgwater's 15.[46]

In a tone that resembled the sensationalist copy of much entertainment journalism at the time, the report reveals a couple of key points. Firstly, it places emphasis on the value of all-round sportsmanship and its reflection of the Association's ethic of equilibrium. The young man referred to in this passage, James Easton Goodland, was also a strong footballer as evidenced by his appearances in the early souvenir photographs [see Figs 1.4 and 1.5]. During his years on the YMCA's sports' teams, he was training to be a chartered accountant, and so he perfectly encapsulated the dynamic between sporting excellence and development of his future professional skills ('James Easton Goodland', 1901.) Furthermore, his father William was a wealthy coal merchant and briefly Mayor of Taunton in 1899 following ten years of service on the local council, indicating personal involvement in the town's improvement projects[47].

Secondly, through metaphors of struggle and revenge that chimed with the recently concluded Boer War, the report not only applied a language of conflict to a small-scale ping-pong match that was contested between neighbouring towns. It also underlined an individual man's role in diverting his energies towards the prosperous self-image of his community. In the heated context of the local derby, Goodland's contribution was remarked as a reflection on the town's reputation, perhaps even implicitly drawing a favourable comparison to their neighbours in Bridgwater. A synecdoche, then, is built into to the model of equilibrium –

[46] *Taunton YMCA minutes, 1901 – 1925,* Somerset Archives and Local Studies, DD/YMt/3.
[47] "Taunton Council – Two Important Municipal Schemes", *Western Times,* October 14th, 1903, pg. 4.

according to the YMCA's doctrine, municipal improvement was just as much located in individual effort as it was in the external material developments of recreational spaces.

What happened, then, if that ideal could not be met? What happened if there was a disconnect between the motives of the individual and the shared goals of the team, ultimately in conflict with the highly prized equilibrium model? Or if the standard of football exhibited in the performance arena fell well short of the notional 'perfect' game? Indeed, perhaps owing to the middle-to-upper composition of the Association's facilitators, reports on their activities were frequent in the local presses, including some detailed coverage of their football matches. This coverage mostly appeared in the *Taunton Courier* which included a regular column on their activities, reporting on committee proceedings, debates and spiritual discussions as well as detailed accounts of their sporting achievements. Alongside the souvenir photographs offered in this section, these newspaper reports are perhaps the best sources by which we can reconstruct the embodied practices of amateur football in the early years of the twentieth century. In some of the reports, the players are judged quite harshly, as this account of a Taunton YMCA match against a team from nearby Ilminster exemplifies:

> The Y.M. forwards were showing very poor form, their combination being conspicuous by its absence […] Gilbert, at left half, did many clever things, but forgot that he had a wing man to mark. Carden, on the right, played a good game, but was not fast enough. His goal, however, was a very neat effort. The forwards played a poor game, Paull being the most prominent.[48]

[48] "Taunton Y.M.C.A. vs Ilminster", *Chard and Ilminster News*, March 2nd 1907, pg. 6.

For a match that finished a respectable one-all, this appears to be quite an unforgiving description of the team's performance, where tactical shortcomings of selected players were exposed and reported to the scrutinising readership. That the Y.M.C.A team appear to have been held to quite a high standard, even in a competition that was in the first place recreational, is perhaps a testament to how easily these matches can be read *as performance* where, to borrow Richard Schechner's succinct definition, the key element is "to do something up to a standard – to succeed, to excel" (Schechner, 2017: 28.) Being 'clever' or a showboat would be one thing, but a neglect of defensive duties off-the-ball and poor positional awareness heralded a breakdown of the team ethic. A similar account of a match played two seasons previously between the same teams takes on a comparably scathing tone, this time with Ilminster winning one-nil:

> The play, however, was of a most mediocre description and calls for little comment. Ilminster had all the play, the visitors being surprisingly weak all round. Bad shooting alone prevented the homesters from piling up a large score. […] 35 minutes each half were to have been played, but a heavy storm stopped the fiasco 10 minutes from the finish. It was a sorry exhibition of football.[49]

This, again, feels almost jarringly dismissive given the essentially amateur nature of the matches; it would be quite rare for a game between two local amateur teams in the present day to be referred to as a 'fiasco' or even 'mediocre'. The heavy storm presumably upset the idealised vision of municipal prosperity still further. These reports from 1905 and 1907 treat

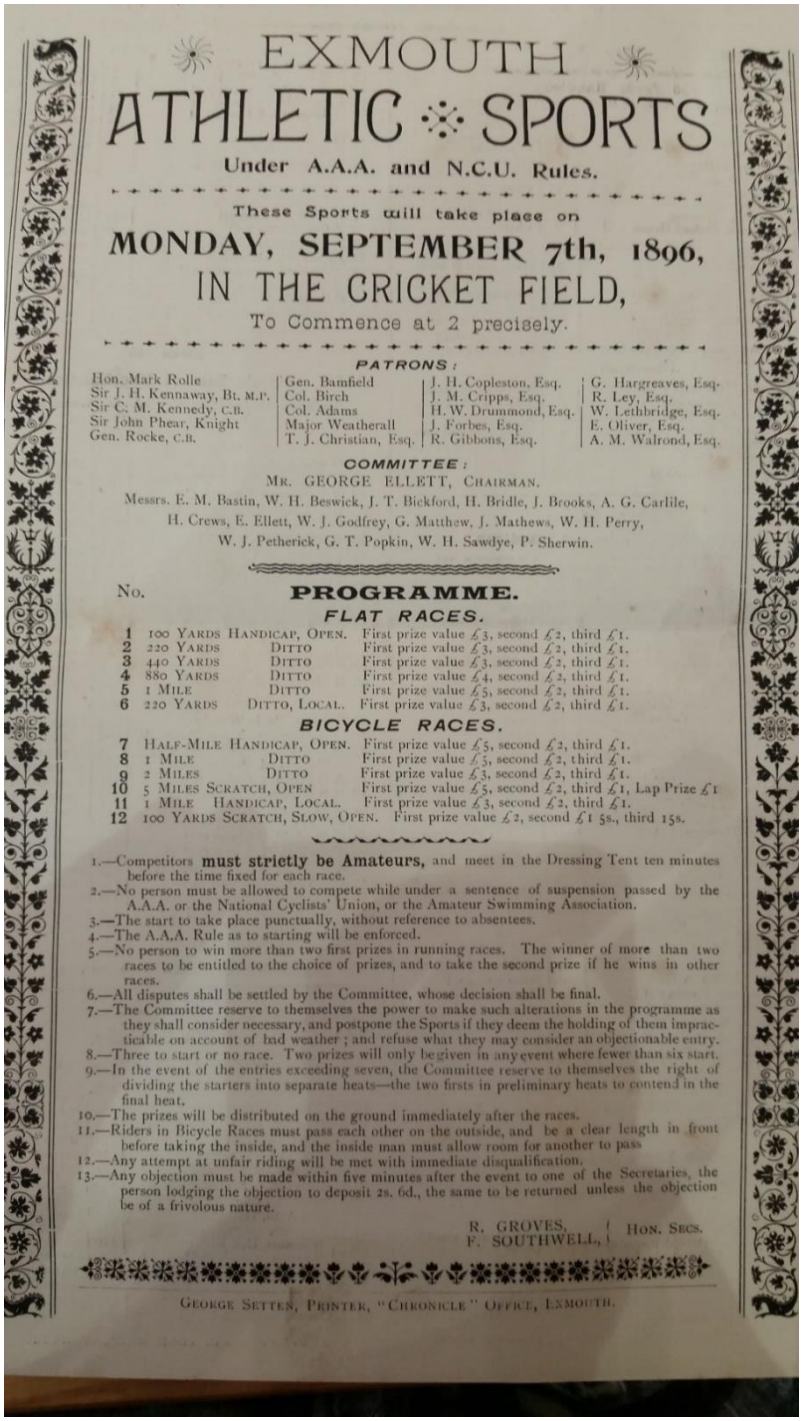
[49]"Late Football: Taunton Y.M.C.A v. Ilminster", *Chard and Ilminster News*, March 25th, 1905, pg. 5.

the players as quasi-professionals, measured against professional standards; they indicate just how seriously the business of sporting competition was taken, not just by the teams themselves but also by local correspondents reporting on their matches.

The most telling word in these match reports, I think, is 'exhibition'. This is an apt descriptor in two important senses, in that it refers to the presentation of bodies as well as to the idealised civic environment. What these accounts of the YMCA matches reveal is the deficit between a culturally accepted value and the extent to which that value is realised in its performance, i.e. in the playing of the game. They placed implicit aesthetic value on the way in which a game of football should be played and how best to achieve it. References to players not being fast enough or not striking the right balance between defence and attack expresses the disconnect between some abstract ideal of football-playing and the efforts, however earnest, to meet that standard. In turn, this is connected to the dramaturgy of idealised civic space discussed in the last section. The failure of the participating bodies to emulate satisfactory gameplay was compounded by the poor weather in the second example, leading the reporter to dismiss the match as a 'fiasco', or more specifically, failing to display the town's self-image in its brightest possible light.

The case study of the Taunton YMCA has established the link between public-facing sporting activity and municipal improvement. Bodies, and particularly those of young men, were co-extensive with the attractiveness of the shared civic environment and were positioned as crucial signifiers in the municipal *mise-en-scene*. Through the medium of public display, the organising agents could exhibit the fruits of their dedicated improvement strategies and build consensus around a masculinity predicated on self-determination and attention to community prosperity. To build on the analysis of body-resourcing at the level of the local community,

another contextual factor to these sporting events needs to be considered. What the examples of the Tiverton Amateur Sports and the Taunton YMCA demonstrate is the way in which national regulations decreed by centralised organising hubs were tailored to suit the concerns of local spheres of influence. There is evidence to suggest that aside from amateur sport's capacity to build inward-facing community spirit, there was also scope to promote or even 'market' the town to temporary visitors through these events. The next section will examine the Amateur Athletic Association in closer detail to convey these dynamics between national administration and community self-expression and marketing, using the coastal Devon town of Exmouth as a key case study.



EXMOUTH

ATHLETIC SPORTS

Under A.A.A. and N.C.U. Rules.

These Sports will take place on

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th, 1896,

IN THE CRICKET FIELD,

To Commence at 2 precisely.

PATRONS:

Hon. Mark Rolle	Gen. Bamfield	J. H. Copleston, Esq.	G. Hargreaves, Esq.
Sir J. H. Kennaway, Bt. M.P.	Col. Birch	J. M. Cripps, Esq.	R. Ley, Esq.
Sir C. M. Kennedy, C.B.	Col. Adams	H. W. Drummond, Esq.	W. Lethbridge, Esq.
Sir John Phear, Knight	Major Weatherall	J. Forbes, Esq.	E. Oliver, Esq.
Gen. Rocke, C.B.	T. J. Christian, Esq.	R. Gibbons, Esq.	A. M. Walrond, Esq.

COMMITTEE:

MR. GEORGE ELLETT, CHAIRMAN.

Messrs. E. M. Bastin, W. H. Beswick, J. T. Bickford, H. Bridle, J. Brooks, A. G. Carlile, H. Crews, E. Ellett, W. J. Godfrey, G. Matthew, J. Mathews, W. H. Perry, W. J. Petherick, G. T. Popkin, W. H. Sawdye, P. Sherwin.

No.

PROGRAMME.

FLAT RACES.

1	100 YARDS HANDICAP, OPEN.		First prize value £3, second £2, third £1.
2	220 YARDS	DITTO	First prize value £3, second £2, third £1.
3	440 YARDS	DITTO	First prize value £3, second £2, third £1.
4	880 YARDS	DITTO	First prize value £4, second £2, third £1.
5	1 MILE	DITTO	First prize value £5, second £2, third £1.
6	220 YARDS	DITTO, LOCAL.	First prize value £3, second £2, third £1.

BICYCLE RACES.

7	HALF-MILE HANDICAP, OPEN.		First prize value £5, second £2, third £1.
8	1 MILE	DITTO	First prize value £5, second £2, third £1.
9	2 MILES	DITTO	First prize value £3, second £2, third £1.
10	5 MILES SCRATCH, OPEN		First prize value £5, second £2, third £1, Lap Prize £1
11	1 MILE HANDICAP, LOCAL.		First prize value £3, second £2, third £1.
12	100 YARDS SCRATCH, SLOW, OPEN.		First prize value £2, second £1 5s., third 15s.

1.—Competitors **must strictly be Amateurs,** and meet in the Dressing Tent ten minutes before the time fixed for each race.
2.—No person must be allowed to compete while under a sentence of suspension passed by the A.A.A. or the National Cyclists' Union, or the Amateur Swimming Association.
3.—The start to take place punctually, without reference to absentees.
4.—The A.A.A. Rule as to starting will be enforced.
5.—No person to win more than two first prizes in running races. The winner of more than two races to be entitled to the choice of prizes, and to take the second prize if he wins in other races.
6.—All disputes shall be settled by the Committee, whose decision shall be final.
7.—The Committee reserve to themselves the power to make such alterations in the programme as they shall consider necessary, and postpone the Sports if they deem the holding of them impracticable on account of bad weather; and refuse what they may consider an objectionable entry.
8.—Three to start or no race. Two prizes will only be given in any event where fewer than six start.
9.—In the event of the entries exceeding seven, the Committee reserve to themselves the right of dividing the starters into separate heats—the two firsts in preliminary heats to contend in the final heat.
10.—The prizes will be distributed on the ground immediately after the races.
11.—Riders in Bicycle Races must pass each other on the outside, and be a clear length in front before taking the inside, and the inside man must allow room for another to pass
12.—Any attempt at unfair riding will be met with immediate disqualification.
13.—Any objection must be made within five minutes after the event to one of the Secretaries, the person lodging the objection to deposit 2s. 6d., the same to be returned unless the objection be of a frivolous nature.

R. GROVES, F. SOUTHWELL, } HON. SECS.

GEORGE SETTEN, PRINTER, "CHRONICLE" OFFICE, EXMOUTH.

- Fig. 1.6 - Programme for the Exmouth Athletic Sports event in 1896. It reads 'Competitors must strictly be Amateurs' in bold, in accordance with national Amateur Athletics Association rules[50].

[50] Exmouth Athletic Sports Club minutes and programme book, 1896-1904, Devon Archives and Local Studies, 1007Z/Z/7.

"Times *Have* Brightened": The Amateur Athletic Association in the South West

Reflecting the principle of 'equilibrium', one of the core views of the Amateur Athletic Association (AAA) was that sport had a prominent role to play in the overall moral improvement of British society. As Richard Holt outlines in his Dictionary of National Biography entry on the organisation, its definition of 'amateur' was consolidated in 1880 at a meeting chaired by three athletes from the University of Oxford, organised to resolve a dispute between London athletic clubs and regional factions, particularly in the north of England (Holt, 2005.) Moving away from the highly classed definition of the 'gentleman amateur' prevalent in the 1860s, which excluded common lower-middle-class professions such as artisans, clerks and general labourers, the tenth item in the Association's Rules and Regulations handbook read that

> An Amateur is one who has never competed for a money prize or staked bet, or with or against professional or any prize, or who has never taught, pursued or assisted in the practice of Athletic exercises as a means of obtaining a livelihood.[51]

The essential quality of this new definition was 'wholesomeness', where the amateur ethos was regulated to ward off negative influences on sport such as gambling or violence. As Norman Baker writes, these elements

> were seen to be socially disruptive and economically costly. For the organising bodies pursuing the regularisation of sport, the application

[51]Rules and Regulations, University of Birmingham Cadbury Research Library, AAA/3/1 [uncatalogued sub-series.]

> of the amateur ethos made an important contribution to a less threatening, more orderly, constructive and efficient use of leisure.
>
> (Baker, 2004: 2)

Men who played for professional football clubs were not permitted to compete, though athletes who played against professional teams without the promise of payment were exempt from this rule. The only other exceptions were granted to military personnel, specifically those previously involved in "competitions at arms between Volunteers and Regulars" or "Officers' Races at Naval and Military Athletic Meetings"[52]. What this definition also implied in line with the equilibrium model was that participation in amateur sport was separate from professional occupation in that it was undertaken during leisure time without the expectation of financial reward. True to the form of late Victorian rational recreation, amateur sport offered regulation of physical exercise in an uncertain and potentially destructive modern society. In this sense, the AAA events at the turn of the twentieth century meet the criteria of a counter-modern live practice, where the rationalisation of male leisure and its realisation through public display was a reassertion of dominant – and patriarchal - norms. As such, a female equivalent to organised amateur athletics would not emerge until 1922 (Holt, 2005.)

Whilst the AAA gave local clubs an element of agency, particularly in terms of who they could admit to the club[53], the central offices of the Association based in the London district of Adelphi asserted their influence in at least two respects: the stipulation of rules, and the issuing of permits or affiliations. The head offices required every participant competing in

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid. In the same clause as the 'amateur' definition, the regulation reads "That all race held under the Laws of the Association be confined to Amateurs. This rule does not interfere with the right of any club to refuse an entry to its own Sports."

any Association event across the country to submit entry forms centrally, asking for detailed race records including location, events, times and personal bests (specifically, and appropriately, referred to in the administrative material as 'performances'[54].) Each of these forms were closely scrutinised, and entrants were routinely subject to discipline procedures if they provided inaccurate or patently false information. These records include some South West-based athletes entering to represent their local clubs - names given in the administrative documents include the Exmouth Harriers, the Cheltenham Wheelers or the Argyle Harriers based in Plymouth.[55] Warnings, suspensions or expulsions were issued if a competitor had failed to disclose personal bests in the races or events he would be entering. These notices were addressed quite formally by post or, occasionally, by way of summons to the central offices in London. Given the essentially voluntary nature of amateur sport, it is striking that its participants were subject to some thorough bureaucratic measures, underlining how seriously the principle of amateurism was to be observed.

With regards to licensing, the South West's relationship with the Amateur Athletic Association before 1914 appears to have been peripheral. Whilst there were numerous athletic clubs based in South West towns and cities that were affiliated to the organisation, the region was not well-represented on the national committees or at its central administrative hub in London. As such, their influence on the rules and regulations that underpinned the various athletic events was quite limited. The Association's primary organisational power was concentrated primarily in the Northern Counties, Southern Counties (including London) and the Midlands. The Rules and Regulations handbook in 1889 does not specifically list any South

[54] Cases of Incorrect Entry Forms 1909-1910, University of Birmingham Cadbury Research Library, AAA/1/4/1.
[55] Ibid.

West cities or towns as part of its General Committee, with the designation of 'Southern Counties' denoting those in close proximity to London. Instead, the region is referred to in somewhat tokenistic fashion as "A West of England Club"[56]. The administrative records indicate that the events organised under AAA jurisdiction came under two categories: one as 'affiliated', which meant that the club organising the event was registered with the Association in the form of a paid annual subscription – defined in the Regulations as "£1 1s for every vote possessed by such Club or Association". Alternatively, clubs are coded in the records as subject to a 'Permit', suggesting that unaffiliated clubs would have needed to apply to the AAA for use of the Association's 'branding', rules and prestige in order to run the events. This is reflected in each of the publicity materials on South West events referred to in this chapter. Both the poster for the Tiverton Sports [see Fig 1.1] and the Exmouth programme above [see Fig 1.6] each refer to the sports being conducted "under A.A.A laws", suggesting that despite the Association's allowance for organisational agency on the part of local committees, they nevertheless retained overall executive control through their intricate bureaucratic procedures.

Having said this, there was a wide range of clubs and meetings that took place in the South West under the auspices of the AAA at the turn of the twentieth century. As such, the live athletics format was adapted for a range of localities. One of these was the Taunton Harriers Athletic Club, recorded in the AAA's documentation as a paying 'affiliate' of the Association.[57] During this time period, the Harriers held an annual meeting on the town's

[56] Rules and Regulations, University of Birmingham Cadbury Research Library, AAA/3/1 [uncatalogued sub-series.]
[57] Cases of Incorrect Entry Forms 1909-1910, University of Birmingham Cadbury Research Library, AAA/1/4/1.

Cricket Ground each April. Significant to the theme of municipal influence, there was crossover between the organising agents of the town's recreational initiatives. For the 1905 Harriers event, President of the Taunton YMCA J.E.W Wakefield (as mentioned in the previous section) served on the judging panel, apparently suspending his preference for team sports for the day. Other Taunton councillors and aldermen took on key committee roles[58].

Workplace athletic societies in the region regularly approached the AAA for permits, with events for Met Water Board employees, fire brigades and even Hairdressers' listed in the AAA's records for 1909 and 1910, demonstrating that sport and other recreational activities were increasingly seen as complementary to professional life[59]. Also subject to AAA permission, the annual Bristol Police Sports organised by the Constabulary Athletic Club were held from at least as early as 1883[60] and were prominent enough to be the objects of local satire [see Fig 1.7 and Fig 1.8]. The 1909 event was notable for its appearance of the star amateur cyclist Clarence Kingsbury, crowned double gold-medallist at the 1908 Olympic Games in London. Despite the controversy over his five mile race – a Birmingham rider was adjudged to have taken victory after a close sprint finish, much to the consternation of the 7,000 strong crowd – it seems significant that such a successful athlete was attracted to an event outside his hometown that proceeded without the global prestige of the Olympiad.[61]

[58] "Taunton Harriers Athletic Club – Annual Sports on the Athletic Ground – Another Highly Successful Meeting", *Taunton Courier,* April 26th 1905, pg. 2.
[59] Cases of Incorrect Entry Forms 1909-1910, Cadbury Research Library, AAA/1/4/1.
[60] "Zoological Gardens, Clifton – Bristol Police Sports", *Western Daily Press,* July 21st 1883, pg. 4.
[61] "Strong Feeling at a Sports Meeting", *Alcester Chronicle,* July 10th, 1909, pg. 6.

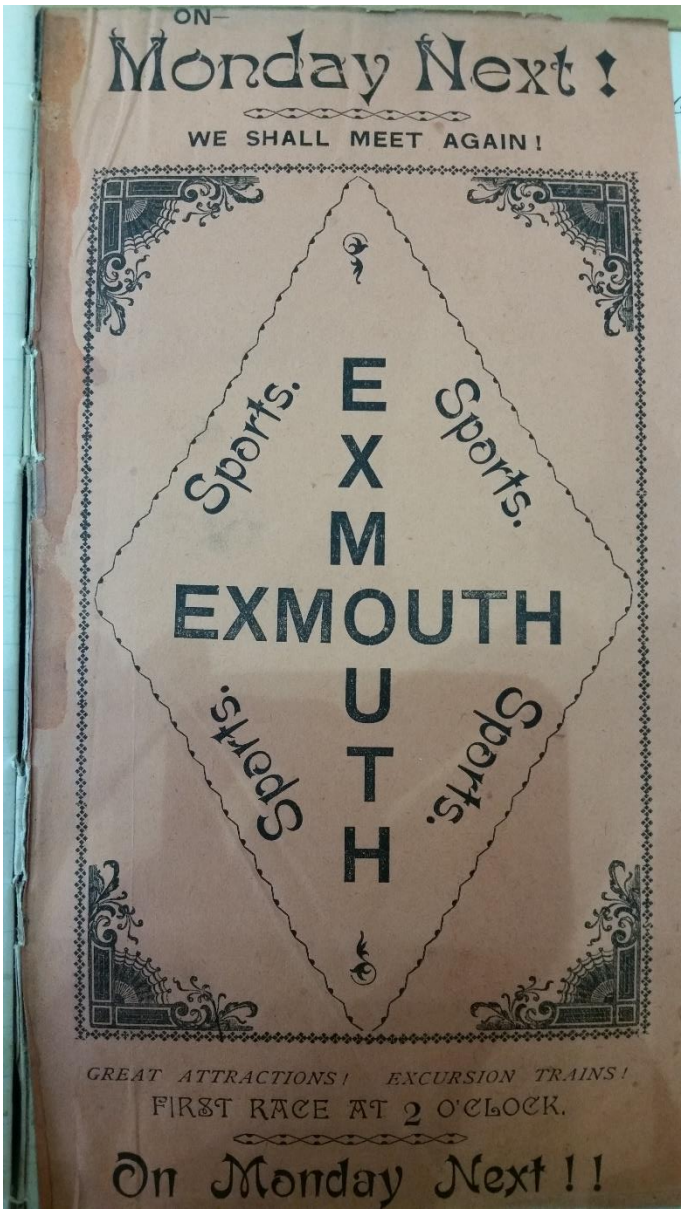
- Fig 1.7 and 1.8 – Fragments of a double-spread cartoon by F.G. Lewin published in *Bristol Magpie* depicting scenes from the Bristol Police Sports, 1896.[62]

[62] Lewin, F.G., "Police Sports at the County Ground", *Bristol Magpie,* September 17th, 1896, pg. 10-11. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

Distinguished from the seriousness on show at the Annual Amateur Athletics Championships (with, as programmes indicate, their somewhat counter-intuitive corporate sponsorships[63]) these community-centric events thus took a form closer to popular entertainment, with celebrity amateurs such as Kingsbury reported in the press as 'chief attractions'. This language was not unlike that used to describe the star turns appearing at the nearby People's Palace or Empire Theatre.[64] What these examples demonstrate is the essential adaptability of the amateur athletic branding to suit a number of civic and geographical contexts, with these events located somewhere between the 'eudemonic' and 'hedonistic' modes of recreation that Snape identifies. Whilst the Bristol Police Sports demonstrate the popularity of athletic meetings in the urban environment, the cases of smaller towns such Taunton and Tiverton show that the 'branding' of the Amateur Athletic Association could be acquired and specifically configured by local committees to suit the reference points of populaces.

[63] Programmes of AAA Annual Championships (1891-1914), University of Birmingham Cadbury Research Library, ATH/AAA/3/3/1/1/1-23.

[64] "Sports at the County Ground – Disappointing Day for Kingsbury", *Western Daily Press,* July 5th, 1909, pg. 9.



- Fig 1.9 - Publicity notice for the Exmouth Athletic Sports, September 1896.[65]

Exmouth is a compelling example of how amateur athletic sports were both organised as an avenue for health improvement (particularly amongst the male population) yet also for the enrichment of the civic environment. The periodical *The Queen – The Lady's Newspaper*

[65] Exmouth Athletic Sports Club minutes and programme book, 1896-1904, Devon Archives and Local Studies, 1007Z/Z/7.

regularly provided advice for middle-to-upper-class house-hunters in a dedicated column, and in October 1896 had this to say about the state of leisure facilities in the town:

> Exmouth sandy beach is very agreeable, and the bathing satisfactory. There is a golf club; good fishing; cricket; tennis; and other amusements. […] I know of no place on its particular lines more satisfactory for you than Exmouth.[66]

This 'agreeability' formed a suitable backdrop for the display of wholesome sport, with the Exmouth AAA event appearing to have something of a national and not merely local reputation. The Lancashire-based publication *Athletic Times* was positive about its revival in 1896, describing it as "the pioneer meeting of the West"[67]. Notably, Portsmouth-based Clarence Kingsbury had also appeared at the Exmouth sports in 1905, suggesting that locally organised sporting events provided a sound formative training for the lofty standards of the International Olympiad.[68] Like its Taunton counterpart, the Exmouth Athletic Sports Club had local councillors and military men serving on their committee. It also had as its president the local Member of Parliament for Honiton Sir John Kennaway, who presented the prizes alongside his wife at the event's conclusion.[69]

In light of its advocacy from agents of municipal improvement, the first iteration of the newly revived Exmouth sports appropriately coincided with the public opening of the Manor House Grounds on September 7th 1896, with a local commentator noting that the sports

[66] L.E.B., "Exmouth, Devon", *The Queen – The Lady's Newspaper,* October 31st 1896, pg. 842.
[67] Untitled column, *Athletic News,* July 13th, 1896, pg. 1.
[68] Exmouth Athletic Sports Club minutes and programme book, 1906 – 1930, Devon Archives and Local Studies, 1007Z/Z/8.
[69] Exmouth Athletic Sports Club minutes and programme book, 1896-1904, Devon Archives and Local Studies, 1007Z/Z/7.

would be a "pleasing interlude" to the ceremony.[70] The day's proceedings included a grand illuminated concert in the evening, enlisting the services of a military band, a concert party and a juvenile troupe of maypole dancers, suggesting that the sports on the nearby Cricket Ground were integrated into an larger programme of civic ceremony. These displays sought to elevate the attractiveness of the town not only to its own residents but also to those visiting from outside. The *Exmouth Journal* noted that "there was a large attendance [at the sports], several hundreds of people being brought into the town by the excursion trains of the London and SW Railway Company", suggesting that the publicity was circulated beyond local outlets. An anonymous correspondent in the same publication reflected fondly on the proceedings, noting that the sports were of "an exceptional character" and that it uplifted the atmosphere and "gaity" of the town:

> The old saying that Exmouth, so far as gaity is concerned, is as dull as ditchwater, has apparently drifted into oblivion for, with the District Council and Tradesmen's Association, times *have* brightened, and the attractions of Monday were of such a character as to draw a considerable number of visitors to the town. There are, I believe, still a large number of summer visitors amongst us, and the events that came off on Monday must have given them a fair idea of what can be done by a union of public bodies. Close upon 1,700 paid for admission to the Manor Grounds during the evening, and no doubt the receipts are of a very satisfactory character.[71]

[70] "Red Letter Day for Exmouth – Formal Opening of the Manor House Grounds", *Freeman's Exmouth Journal,* September 5th, 1896, n.p.
[71] "Here and There", *Freeman's Exmouth Journal*, September 12th 1896, n.p.

In turn, Exmouth attracted not only spectators from other locations, but also athletes from all over the country. Whilst some events were strictly reserved for local participation, the 1896 programme indicates the involvement of men from nearby Devon towns such as Teignmouth, Torquay and Paignton.[72] Additionally, however, there were vast number of entrants from athletic and cycling clubs across the country, notably including those from the main hubs of amateur athletic influence in London and the Northern Counties. To take the one-mile race as an example, there were representatives of teams from Halifax in Yorkshire, the Regent Street Polytechnic (now the University of Westminster) and Colchester in Essex.[73] Given the sports at Exmouth were part of "Devonshire Week", a county-wide series of athletic events to take place during September 1896 that also comprised fixtures in Chudleigh, Exeter, Sidmouth and Tiverton[74], the Exmouth event "secured a better list of entries in several classes", with the athletics weeks presenting an opportunity for men to 'tour' to each of the county's events[75]. Notwithstanding the overall attraction of Devon as a holidaymaking destination (see Parker, 2016) the Exmouth sports event was one of cross-regional interface that provided a scope for the town to be promoted to its visitors. The anonymous reporter for the *Exmouth Journal* noted that local businesses stayed open during the opening of the Manor House Grounds and the sports, suggesting the day presented prime commercial opportunity for its residents[76]. In essence, then, what we see is a practice of mutual benefit between two spheres of public life. Athletics on the one hand were promoted as a moral and physical good

[72] Exmouth Athletic Sports Club minutes and programme book, 1896-1904, Devon Archives and Local Studies, 1007Z/Z/7.
[73] Ibid.
[74] "Athletics – Fixtures for August", *Sporting Life,* August 12th, 1896, pg. 8.
[75] "Here and There", *Freeman's Exmouth Journal*, September 12th 1896.
[76] Ibid.

that could be integrated into community leisure time, and on the other the events incentivised short-term commercial gain for local investors and businesses.

Perhaps given its subjection to AAA rules, the Exmouth event followed much the same format as that at Tiverton. Running and cycling classifications were split evenly across twelve events, culminating with a 'slow bike race' participated in by local riders – it is unclear how seriously such an event would have been taken, with this form of 'anti-race' nevertheless requiring significant balancing skills in order to be successful. A popular programme of music was performed by the Band of the Voluntary Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment, including a selection from Sidney Jones' operetta *The Geisha,* interludes from Caryll and Monckton's West End hit *The Circus Girl* and J.P. Sonsa's "Liberty Bell", the latter of which was used as an overture. [77] One of the factors that distinguished the Exmouth sports from its Devon counterparts – Sidmouth excepted - was its *mise-en-scène.* The Cricket Ground's proximity to the seafront offered a striking visual landscape to spectators, particularly novel to those visiting from urban centres. The signifier of the coast as a frontier was relevant to the cultural imaginary at a time of some anxiety about Britain's imperial position, imbuing the spectacle of male athleticism with potent nationalist meaning (see Calvert, 2013.) The blend of entertainment, regulated sport and the aesthetic regimes of empire gave the Exmouth sports a fete-like atmosphere that was at once fun and serious, with the for-its-own-sake ethic of amateurism intersecting with commercial and even political interests.

What is especially notable about the sports in terms of the 'equilibrium' model were the prizes on offer. Instead of cash sums - which would have taken the sports into the

[77] Exmouth Athletic Sports Club minutes and programme book, 1896-1904, Devon Archives and Local Studies, 1007Z/Z/7.

professional realm by definition – the prizes normally took the form of material objects that reflected an estimated value. At the 1896 Exmouth event, these were trophies such as vases or jugs whose value corresponded to the competitor's placing and the distance of the race - £5 for the winner of the one-mile flat race compared with £3 for the winner of the one-hundred yard sprint[78]. These prizes were mounted in the window of the local estate agents and at auctioneers Messrs Crews and Sons before the sports, an interesting strategy given the day's emphasis on community self-display.[79] However, as the event developed in subsequent years, the prizes became functional as well as ornamental. The 1905 event presented to the placed competitors of the half-mile bicycle race a set of salts for the winner, a set of fruit knives and forks to the runner-up, and a set of pickle jars for the man in third place.[80] What this suggests is that bodily proportion and good performance on the sporting field was to be rewarded with the trappings of middle-class domesticity. In other words, a man's athletic success was seen to correspond with social position, underlining the equilibrium model of work, health and style that Holt proposes. Through this lens, masculinity at the amateur athletic events was bound up in the accumulation and display of commodity: this is not only relevant to the literal, material objects on offer as prizes, but this commodification also extended to the body itself, with decent physical appearance and athletic ability granting men an increase in social capital.

Considering amateur sport as a live, embodied performance event reveals how specially designated environments framed well-proportioned male bodies in relation to middle-class respectability. This is best exemplified through publicity materials, newspaper

[78] Ibid.
[79] "Red Letter Day for Exmouth – Formal Opening of the Manor House Grounds", *Freeman's Exmouth Journal,* September 5th, 1896, n.p.
[80] Ibid.

reports and the dramaturgical properties of the display including up-to-date musical programmes and the glossy objects that constituted the prizes. In line with a key theme of this thesis, as much as these performances directed their focus towards a type of masculinity that prioritised personal and physical equilibrium, it is worth noting what may have been concealed. Addressing the lack of historiography around working-class participation in recreational sport, Carol Osborne and Stephen Wagg note that the Amateur Athletic Association "was a governing body determined to use its amateur rules as a pretext for social exclusion" (Osborne and Wagg, 2017: 121.) This came at a moment of tension between governing elites and working-class communities regarding leisure choices, with Brad Beaven particularly alluding to increased animosity between these groups:

> from the socialists to the Salvationists, a common strand of thinking materialised which believed that only through aggressive forms of rational recreation, taken to the heart of working-class communities, could the modern citizen be fostered. […] working men showed a remarkable propensity to manipulate the entertainment offered to coincide with their own cultural preferences. Therefore these actions did not emerge from a passive, conservative or inward-looking culture, since aggressive rational recreationalists who attempted to colonise their neighbourhoods were met with indifference, irony or even violence. Indeed, traditional male working-class leisure not only emerged unscathed by the moral reformist onslaught but was bolstered by new and popular forms of commercial leisure.
>
> (Beaven, 2005 : 39-40)

Widening participation through municipal schemes was therefore not equivalent to universal engagement. Whilst the public arena of amateur sport was in the hands of various governing elites either at the national level or through local authorities that controlled the vast majority of financial and administrative resources, innovations in commercial leisure (including the explosion in popularity of professional football) allowed communities to turn away from the exclusionary practices of recreational organizations and forge their own leisure activities. Part of the mechanism of community-set amateur sports, then, was the direction of attention towards a *specific* point of view about desirable masculinity and the civic environment, merely reflecting elite interests and ideals through its organisation. This world of self-control and ideal health, however, was not necessarily shared by the population at large. The proliferation of commercial leisure practices at the end of the nineteenth century allowed other visions of masculinity and the body to come to the fore through other modes of public display.

Popular entertainment in purpose-built buildings was one such mode. In terms of the South West, the most prominent of these were the Livermore's People's Palaces with their two flagship halls in Bristol and Plymouth, whilst large-scale venues in smaller towns such as Taunton, Tiverton or Exmouth usually being municipal town halls. Unlike amateur sporting events that shaped embodied masculinity along moral, spiritual and perhaps intellectual lines, the spectacular world of the variety hall sought primarily to prompt direct emotional responses, and these were linked to its prerogative as a money-making venture. I have made the argument that the men's bodies on show in the YMCA football matches and AAA meetings in the region were commodified in the sense that their labours accumulated certain social capital and were perceived to grant them access to personal improvement. Furthermore, as press accounts and forms of administrative literature have shown, these bodies and their

inherent energies were to be resourced and in turn directed towards the upkeep of a locale's positive self-image. The next chapter takes forward this principle of self-improvement through physical exercise and applies it to the case study of a 'professional body', namely Eugen Sandow, who made a number of appearances in the region from the 1890s onwards. Whilst Sandow also borrowed from the rhetoric of equilibrium insofar as he connected physical fitness with improvement in the professional and spiritual spheres, his practices cannot be separated from the logic of retail and commercialism. Distinct from the neoclassical ideal of the male body that cherished proportion and modulation, Sandow's body was itself a novel visual spectacle that brought to bear the contradictory logic of counter-modernity. His performance practices harked back to that same harmonious ideal yet in the spectacular act he also posited his body as a consumable good. In essence, it might be said that Sandow financially benefitted from a society of fragmentation that those balanced and proportioned male bodies were supposedly built to correct.

TWO

"Call and See It": Masculine Spectacle and the Scopic Economy


THE EDISON KINETOSCOPE.

The Latest and Most Remarkable of Mr Edison's Inventions is
NOW ON EXHIBITION AT No. 2, PARK STREET.
CALL AND SEE IT.
Living Pictures of a New and Startling Character. Something even More Wonderful than the Phonograph. See Window for opinions of London press. Price 2d each scene.

- Fig 2.1 - Advertisement for the first South West exhibition of the Edison Kinetoscope at Park Street, Bristol, 1895.[81]

Male bodies as core signifiers within the representational fields of Edwardian live performance raise the question of the kinds of 'looking' that those bodies invited. In the context of what literary historian Bradley Deane has described as the "broadly intensifying consciousness of masculine spectacle" in imperial Britain at the turn of the twentieth century (Deane, 2014: 28) the way in which masculinity was foregrounded in the live cultural practices of the South West ran parallel to a fascination with the aesthetic potential of the male body. In February 1890, a few years before he would be billed as an "expensive engagement" at the Livermore's People's Palace in Bristol[82], a 23-year-old German bodybuilder named Eugen

[81] "Amusements and Exhibitions", *Western Daily Press,* January 9th 1895, pg. 4. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

[82] "The People's Palace", *Bristol Magpie,* March 24th, 1898, pg. 17.

Sandow would give a demonstration at the city's Victoria Rooms. This was a venue renowned for its focus on classical music recitals and the exhibition of painting and sculpture, and Sandow's appearance there signalled an integration of the built male body into highbrow circles[83]. As the decade progressed, however, Sandow diversified the media in which he appeared, keeping attuned to technological developments and changes in popular tastes. In the early stages of his American tour from 1894-1896, he appeared in an eponymous film that was shot on the Edison Kinetoscope, the first commercial prototype of which was presented in Brooklyn in May 1893 (Musser, 1990: 75-77.) On the advice of his promoter Florenz Ziegfeld, the film consists of a short excerpt of Sandow's repertoire of muscle display and introduces the viewer to the 'classical selection' he would adopt in his live shows. Communication on this new technological achievement reached the South West newspapers including the *Bristol Mercury* in March 1894, at the same time as it did in other regional presses[84]. Bristol audiences got their first opportunity to witness this new technology and the Sandow film during the following January, at an exhibition in the fashionable retail district on Park Street [see Fig 2.1]. Charging two shillings per scene, the design of the Kinetoscope facilitated scopophilic desire with the spectator invited to look through a peephole at the top of the apparatus (see Musser, 1990 : 76.)

The production of *Sandow*, exhibited as he was in an advanced state of undress, coincided with increased public awareness of male homosexuality, with the infamous Wilde trials taking place just a few months later (Brauer, 2018: 38-47.) In the context of new innovations in visual media, their immense commercial potential and the latent

[83] "Sandow in Bristol", *Bristol Mercury*, February 7th, 1890, pg. 3.
[84] "The Last 24 Hours", *Bristol Mercury,* March 8th, 1894, pg. 5.

homoeroticism of public displays of the male body, the "Sandow craze" invites some exploration as to how this new market heralded a new economy of looking. This is to question the extent of the performing subject's power when he was exposed to a fragmented and unpredictable set of readings, and relevantly to Sandow what impact this had on the commercial development of physical culture. This fascination with masculine spectacle situated the relationship between the body and its beholder in a distinctive and sometimes contradictory ideological framework that depending on the mode of (re)presentation could incite any number of responses. One type of response to the Sandow spectacle provoked admiration insofar as it offered a concrete vision of what a single flesh-and-bone body could achieve by itself. In contrast, and as briefly referred to in Chapter One, these bodies could also be regarded pejoratively by those that advocated for a slender and proportionate ideal of the male body, expressing their distaste for muscularity as a spectacle. As the president of the Taunton YMCA J.E.W Wakefield would declare at an annual meeting in 1903, he had "no sympathy for the "nubbly muscular monstrosities"" so prevalent in the region's popular entertainment at the time[85]. Given his sustained international fame during those years, it would be no surprise if Wakefield was referring directly to Sandow.

In light of these competing visions about what the ideal male body might have looked like and the kinds of ideological labour it could perform, a performance analysis of these practices might ask what live, embodied spectacles of popular entertainment could offer in terms of expressing gendered ideals that other media could not. Though other representational media also distributed neoclassical models of masculinity into the popular realm as we have seen with the Kinetoscope, I suggest that it was in the live, non-petrifying

[85] "Mr J.E.W Wakefield on Physical Work", *Taunton Courier*, June 24th 1903.

(see Elswit, 2008) frameworks of theatre and sport in which the legitimacy of those bodies was most directly put to the test. It is true that rapid developments in photographic technologies and the expansion of printed media coverage in the nineteenth century allowed for a more efficient circulation of ideas around embodied manliness. However, as performance theorist Sue-Ellen Case has observed, even those new technologies had the effect of focussing the gaze in a specific way due to a deliberate positioning of the recording apparatus in relation to the photographed subject (cited in Burt, 2007: 32.)

As a result, the assumptions about an idealised heterosexual male spectator are arguably not quite so clear cut when this positioning is configured specifically for live, face-to-face consumption. Though his specific reference point is theatre-dance and ballet, both of which have distinct traditions of gendered repertoires, the dance historian Ramsey Burt summarises this complex interplay between masculinity, the live embodied encounter and ways of looking. Burt crucially acknowledges that these systems are historically and culturally contingent, writing that

> in the moment of live performance […] the relationship between the spectator and the male dancer is one in which dominant, supposedly natural and common sense definitions of normative masculinity may be acknowledged, but only through negotiation and adaptation; as a result, their conflictual and contradictory nature may, sometimes, become visible. This suggests that it is no longer possible to see a dance work as the expression, solely, of aesthetic values which transcend the circumstances of their creation. Rather than seeing the choreographer as a unified and universal subject who evokes timeless truths, it is

> necessary to see him or her as a complex and potentially conflictual subject, someone in touch with, and formed by, the circumstances of their time and place.
>
> (Burt, 2007: 38)

The performance theorist Maaike Bleeker shares a similar view on the historical contingency of 'looking' in the theatrical framework, arguing that

> growing awareness of the inevitable entanglement of vision with what is called visuality – the distinct historical manifestations of visual experience – draws attention to the necessity of locating vision within a specific historical and cultural situation. This is a situation in which what we think we see is the product of vision 'taking place' according to the tacit rules of a specific scopic regime and within a relationship between the one seeing and what is seen. What seems to be just 'there to be seen' is, in fact, rerouted through memory and fantasy, caught up in threads of the unconscious and entangled with the passions.
>
> (Bleeker, 2008: 1-2)

As Burt and Bleeker both explain, not only was the visuality of flesh-and-bone bodies itself subject to shifting socio-political forces, they also reflected the desires of the producers behind the bodily spectacle. Alongside a team of collaborators including the prominent papermaker Howard Spicer, who edited *Sandow's Magazine of Physical Culture* for its entire run between 1899 and 1907, Sandow exercised considerable agency over his practices. As such, his messages of ideal health as interchangeable with a moral society pervaded both his

publications and his on-stage repertoires. With this extent of editorial control on and off stage, Sandow could in the encounter direct the audience's gaze through various scenographic tricks. For example as Fae Brauer notes, deliberately placed elements of costume on stage would hint "at the direction and dimension of what lay beneath" and certainly could invite the viewer's attention towards an obvious 'punctum' in the *mise-en-scène* (Brauer, 2018 : 44)

Such tricks, however, could invite any number of scopic responses, some of which would subvert the imperialist symbolism that tended to be reflected through the strong and proportionate male body. Specifically, this imagery could court homosexual desire through its often quite overt (homo)erotic charge. Feminist research into the connection between visual cultures and the depiction of the female body has been very productive in revealing how visual representation is inherently ideological, and thus the beholder's gaze is never neutral. The theatre critic Jill Dolan, writing specifically from the vantage point of performance, suggests that the scopic contract between performer and audience in theatre has an inherent tendency to reproduce patriarchal ideologies. She argues that "the whole structural reality of the performance exchange between producers, performers and spectators is ideologically marked" and in so doing rejects the idea that there is singular or universal 'way' to look (Dolan, 1991: 41). Performance theorist Peggy Phelan takes this point further in her critique of the too-simplistic relationship between visibility and Western identity politics, dismissing the notion that to be seen (and therefore to be 'marked') in the theatrical frame necessarily leads to legitimacy in wider society. She reminds us that

> representation is almost always on the side of the one who looks and almost never on the side of the one who is seen. […] The image of the

> woman displays not the subjectivity of the woman who is seen, but rather the constituent forces of the man who wants to see her.
>
> (Phelan, 1993: 26)

Speaking of contemporary Anglo-American culture, Phelan further observes that "if representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young women should be running Western culture" (1993: 10) making the salient point that giving yourself to be looked at is far from a guarantor of wider social power. However, that looked-at body may have some residual power in directing and holding the gaze of the looker, consolidating the view that the act of looking - and the act of situating one's body to be looked within a certain scopic contract - is a moment where the artistic intentions of the beheld might be compromised by the subjective desires of the beholder.

To apply this complex economy of looking to the Victorian British context, the art historian Alison Smith demonstrates that the status of bodies in Victorian visual culture – most prominently the figure of the nude – was controversial in their interplay between ambitions to high art on the one hand and a wider social wish to contain particular sexual behaviours on the other (Smith, 1996: 1-2). That dynamic between aesthetic regimes and moral conduct generally led to the 'disappearing' and 'fading' of the male nude from the nineteenth century artistic imagination in favour of depictions of female bodies. However, as both Smith and Margaret Walters have acknowledged, this was a commercial consideration as much as a moral one. Walters particularly makes a link between market demand and how the 'nude' itself was "automatically taken to mean a woman" in the mid-to-late Victorian art scene:

> [In the nineteenth century] there was an apparently insatiable demand at all levels of society for discreetly sexy Venuses. Forgetting his own body, nineteenth-century man uses woman as a screen for his fantasies. On her naked body the artist explores his longings and nightmares, and asserts his creativity.
>
> (Walters, 1978: 228)

Smith also usefully points out that "while purchasing remained largely a masculine prerogative, artists could not afford to ignore the women who comprised a significant section of the viewing public" (1996: 5). In other words, whilst the modes of distribution remained predominantly in the hands of men, it was through the complex dynamics between seer and seen that women as well as men had some stake in perpetuating gendered ideologies, insofar as visual culture catered to both male and female markets. This attitude is perhaps an earlier version of what feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey would influentially conceptualise as the "male gaze" (Mulvey, 2009: 19) to denote specific visual representations of the female body that assumed a heterosexual male consumer and had invariably male producers, rendering her as a surface upon which individual male (or female) fantasies could be played out.

Despite these valuable contributions to visual culture scholarship and the ongoing influence of the male gaze concept, the relationship between consumerism and visuality invites further inquiry, especially in relation to fin-de-siècle masculine spectacle and its interplay with power and desire. What was the precise nature of these scopic markets when the chief signifiers of certain bodily spectacles in Edwardian popular entertainment were male? Given the preponderance of strongman spectacles that developed concurrently with advancements in the commerce of sport and health (see Heffernan, 2018) how forgotten really

was the nude or nearly nude male body in this new aesthetic regime? In a context where the presentation of bodies of either sex were policed by moral anxieties at the same time as they were positioned for mass consumer markets, the desires of the looker to either have or to emulate the given-to-be-looked-at object seems important to a discussion of performed masculinities at the turn of the twentieth century. This appears especially relevant when late Victorian and Edwardian masculinities, as we saw in Chapter One, were constructed in terms of resource and commodity, with middle-class men and their bodies caught between the desire to emulate hegemonic myths of manliness and the ever-present potential for failure. Peggy Phelan summarises this relationship between desire and the subject's incitement to look at an often unattainable Other, especially relevant to the live and embodied framework. She writes

> desire shows itself through failure. Desire is recognisable because we are not in the image we see/k. The failure to secure self-seeing leads again to the imagination of annihilation and castration. The scopic drive returns us to the failure of representation […] and the (failed) desire for a reciprocal gaze keeps the looker looking.
>
> (Phelan, 1993: 20-21)

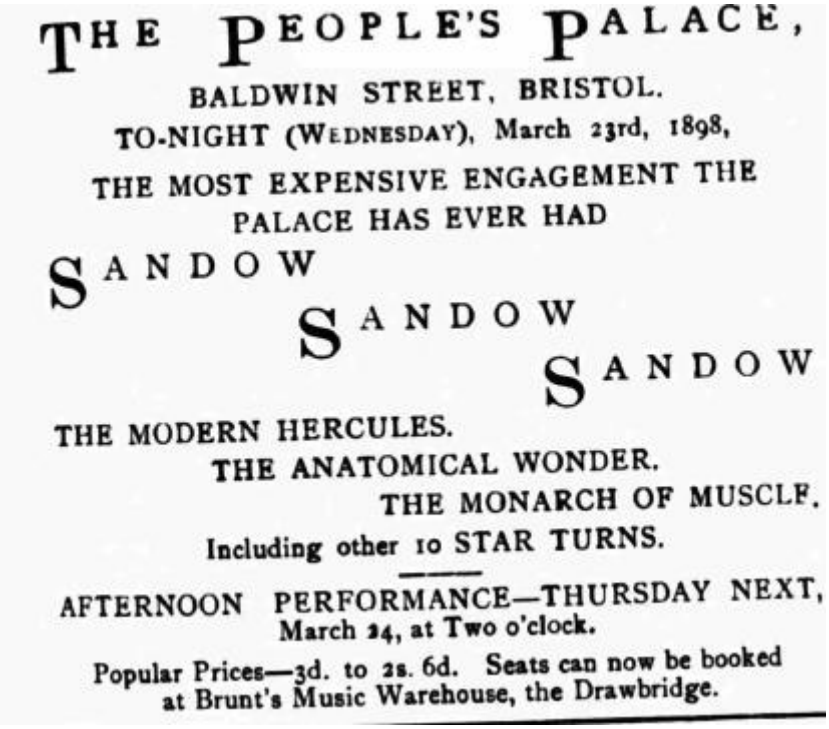
The capability of the image or object to directly address what the looker or consumer desired was at the heart of early twentieth century consumer culture. More specifically, when gender becomes entangled with market logics of value and commodity, the gaze of the desiring subject exposes how subjectivity itself is founded on a permanently frustrated effort to address and satisfy a lack. This can be applied to the gendered advertising and correspondence attributed to turn of the century 'physical culture', of which Sandow was the

key figurehead. As we shall see, its marketing strategies took advantage of both photographic technologies and the live spectacle of the variety hall to achieve a couple of key goals: to present desirable male bodies, and to capture the imagination of male and female markets alike.

It is this complex dynamic between desire, the compulsion to look and the ever-fragile construct of masculinity that this chapter focusses on. It maps how this new 'scopic economy' framed certain live practices in the late Victorian and Edwardian South West, with the presentation of men's bodies in the live moment interpreted here as a consumption activity. The case studies explored here not only situated masculinity as an ideal to be aspired to and to be marvelled at, but through that very idealisation brought to bear the fragilities and contradictions inherent to masculinity in the first place. If men in late Victorian visual cultures were "constrained into conforming to unconvincing stereotypes of manly endeavour" (Smith, 1996: 142) a new reading along these lines is necessary to address examples of self-staged, self-theatricalised male bodies at the turn of the twentieth century.

By drawing on the example of Sandow's tour of variety halls in the region (though specifically the urban hub of Bristol) I would like to make the case that the way in which male bodies were looked at may well have been conditional on the medium in which those bodies were presented. In other words, I argue that the live theatrical context offered a mode of looking that portrayed bodies in a way that other media did not (or could not.) Implicit in this question is whether the power of the scopic regime discussed above is altered between the captured image and the live encounter, and for what purpose. This is to ask whether Sandow and the spectacle of his body was received differently during his live variety act compared with his depiction in photography or the various other visual documentation he deployed.

Whereas a photographic image tends to conceal the process behind the body's (self)-construction – in the form of training, costuming, or the transition from a neutral and everyday physical stance to an active 'pose' to be captured by the camera (see Barthes, 1980; Schneider, 2011) - the live encounter makes no such guarantees that these processes will remain hidden. Failure haunts the performing body, and this is a particularly familiar refrain in scholarship on the shaky constitution of male subjectivity (see Thomas, 2008; Walsh, 2010; Buchbinder, 2012). It is in the live, immediate context where every imperfection in movement or anatomy is transmitted to its witness, no matter how careful the performing agent may be in concealing such influences through lighting, costume or make-up. The potential gaps between the intended representation on the one hand and the various readings of the audiences on the other would have been made particularly stark in a 3,000-seat auditorium such as the People's Palace in Bristol, where those at the front of the stalls would likely have had a different scopic relationship to Sandow when up close than those dozens of yards away in the circles and galleries.


THE PEOPLE'S PALACE,
BALDWIN STREET, BRISTOL.
TO-NIGHT (WEDNESDAY), March 23rd, 1898,
THE MOST EXPENSIVE ENGAGEMENT THE PALACE HAS EVER HAD
SANDOW
SANDOW
SANDOW
THE MODERN HERCULES.
THE ANATOMICAL WONDER.
THE MONARCH OF MUSCLE.
Including other 10 STAR TURNS.
AFTERNOON PERFORMANCE—THURSDAY NEXT, March 24, at Two o'clock.
Popular Prices—3d. to 2s. 6d. Seats can now be booked at Brunt's Music Warehouse, the Drawbridge.

- Fig. 2.2 – Advertisement in the *Bristol Magpie* for the third evening of Sandow's week-long run at the People's Palace, Bristol, March 1898.[86]

On March 21st 1898 Sandow made the first of three headline appearances in front of a capacity crowd at the People's Palace, Bristol, where he was billed as "The monarch of muscle" and "The anatomical wonder" [see Fig. 2.2] A consummate showman and businessman who attracted as much interest from the sciences as he did the arts, his career is perhaps the most striking example from the time of what would become broadly defined as 'physical culture'. This was at once a matter of individual, private self-cultivation yet also an avenue for the public exhibition of the crafted body, with each having immense commercial

[86] "The People's Palace", *Bristol Magpie,* March 24th, 1898, pg. 17. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

potential. His engagement at Bristol's largest variety theatre was an extension of his 1894-1896 transatlantic tour where his blend of showmanship, entrepreneurship and moral crusading found a wide and fascinated audience (Sandow, 1897: 119-143.) Before arriving in the South West, Sandow's year began with engagements in Edinburgh[87] and Glasgow[88], moving south to Hull[89], Sheffield[90] and Birmingham[91] respectively before his two-week run in Bristol[92]. This suggests that he had become something of a fixture on the popular provincial entertainment circuit in Britain. Further, the journalistic literature particularly foregrounded the spectacular theatricality of his body, conveyed through his meticulous sequences of 'working out' in performance. For instance, an account in the specialist theatre and music-hall periodical *The Era* of a "private anatomical exhibition" Sandow gave at the London Pavilion for an audience of male medical students is a testament to the theatricality of both his musculature and his body-building practices. He is described by the writer as "that graceful and perfect specimen of muscular manhood"[93]. This comment is telling insofar as it highlights the self-construction of masculinity as a theatrical quality through which these medical professionals could be persuaded by the "constructed certitudes" of muscularity and poise as core aspects of male 'naturalness' (Forth, 2008: 6.)

The account of Sandow's "turn" in Bristol offers an insight into his 'bodily repertoire' that could be performed night-by-night, underlining not just an intention to exhibit extra-human shows of strength but to wring as much theatricality out of that spectacle as possible:

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[87] "New Year Entertainments", *Edinburgh Evening News,* January 1st, 1898, pg. 2.
[88] "The Theatres – Glasgow Empire Palace", *Glasgow Herald,* January 11th 1898, pg. 7.
[89] "New Palace Theatre – Anlaby Rd – Hull", *Hull Daily Mail,* January 31st 1898, pg. 2.
[90] "Sandow at the Empire", *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent,* February 22nd 1898, pg. 7.
[91] Lawrence Levy, E, "Sandow - His Wonderful Show - An Appreciation by a Brother Champion", *Sports Argus*, March 5th 1898, n.p.
[92] "People's Palace", *Bristol Magpie,* March 31st, 1898, pg. 8.
[93] "Music Hall Gossip", *The Era,* November 21st, 1896, pg. 17.

> The first part of his "turn" was taken up with a variety of posings, and these were interesting, not alone for their forcefulness of execution and clever conception, but also because they brought into play the remarkable muscular outlines of the artiste. […] Sandow's weightlifting on horseback, throwing himself backwards over the hind-quarters of the animal, and maintaining his hold only by feet in the stirrups – was quite exciting, and then in a humorous sense the performance ceased with Sandow carrying off man, piano, and chair from a platform, and terminating a none too classic selection. Sandow in this capacity would be welcome in many parts of suburban Bristol.[94]

As if reminding the reader of the ultimate human-ness of Sandow and his body, there is also room for a comment on the intermittent 'failing' of the strongman spectacle, conveyed in this review with perhaps a slight twinge of disappointment:

> Subsequently he went through a variety of weight-lifting exhibitions, that gave place in turn to the lifting of men in a prone position on one hand and placing them in various other positions, this feat occasionally being discharged with none too much gentleness.[95]

[94] "The People's Palace", *Western Daily Press*, March 22nd 1898, pg. 2.
[95] Ibid.

These remarks suggest a higher bar in the live performance when compared with Sandow's photographic presentations, with the tiniest errors or failures threatening to puncture the illusion.

Sandow's reputation as a polymath whose brand encompassed physical excellence, canny entrepreneurship and showman-like flair reflected the commercial dimensions of physical culture at the turn of the twentieth century. With Sandow as its forerunner, the movement popularised schemes of exercise, diet and personal fitness as a means of promoting a wider rhetoric of self-improvement, and thus became a way through which individuals could build their sense of identity. There are two primary ways in which physical culture intersected with markers of identity that had inadvertently exclusionary effects. Firstly, it is worth recognising how the rhetoric of physical cultivation assumed a white, middle-class male audience in its promotional material and imagery, with the effect of sidelining (though not completely silencing) women and girls. This is forcefully expressed through Alexander Bryce's popular health book *Ideal Health and How to Attain It Through Physical Culture,* published in Bristol in two editions in 1901 and 1909. Bryce described physical culture as necessarily systematic; the body was to be in service of a repeatable set of exercises that were goal-directed towards personal and moral growth. These systems were placed in the context of the human body's intrinsic benefits to society at large, in a similar way to the 'body-resourcing' rhetoric adopted by the youth organisations explored in Chapter One. Bryce writes that

> the aim always [of physical culture], and the net result in the average of instances, must be to make a man not strong, but healthy; a whole man. It may make him a strong man, but only in virtue of his

> exceptional endowments. To adapt Matthew Arnold's definition of culture to the physical aspect of the question, we might say: *"Physical culture is exercise; but exercise with a purpose to guide it, and with a system."*
>
> (Bryce, 1909: 4-5, his emphasis)

At face value, this perspective matches the ideologies of the equilibrium standard. Speaking in his capacity as a medical doctor, Bryce advocated a regime of exercises and reps to be undertaken by individuals of *any* physique (and, at least in theory, any economic background) as part of a daily routine. On this basis, Bryce saw a common ground between amateur sport and physical culture in that each involved individual effort, with recreational time directed towards an ideological purpose. A healthy man, Bryce declared to his readers, was a "whole man".

The gendered language that Bryce adopted in the above passage, and indeed throughout his whole treatise, reflects another typical feature shared by both amateur sport and physical culture: that is, the dominance of masculine imagery in its public dissemination. By and large the literature that promoted the benefits of systematic exercise gendered the public face of physical culture as male. For example, the edition of Bryce's book published for the Bristol Medico-Chirurgical Society in 1909 contains several diagrams of its recommended repertoire of exercises, with all of the "illustrations from life" included in the book depicting a youthful male demonstrator (Bryce, 1909.) Resonant with British theatre practitioner Edward Gordon Craig's concept of the *Über-Marionette* – an idea that Craig formalised in a famous essay on the subject in 1908 – the illustration captures a quiet focus, a precise application of the limbs in use and a well-defined muscularity displayed by the nearly-nude life model. Apart from portraying an already-trained, already-crafted figure of idealised

athletic masculinity, the illustrations perhaps also signify the removal of ego on the part of the practising subject, a quality highlighted by Craig in his scenographic vision (Craig, 1908: 3-4.) I return to the idea of repertoire and surrogate bodies later in the chapter, as bodily abstraction became a core part of Sandow's marketing strategy.

Women and girls were by no means wholly excluded from physical culture's rhetoric of self-improvement. There are examples from the early twentieth-century South West presses with female physical instructors advertising their services to "Ladies and Children" and arranging personal visits to middle-to-upper-class households[96]. The "Physical Training in Secondary Schools" memorandum circulated by the government in 1908 gave detailed instructions as to the respective physical education of male and female students, in turn adopted by a number of South West educational establishments. However, the rationale for such guidance on physical education differed between boys and girls, with the memorandum providing the well-intentioned suggestion that girls could combine their exercise lessons with the making of their kit in their needlework classes[97]. It is notable that the 1901 revised edition of Sandow's book *Strength and How to Obtain It* printed letters of recommendation for his courses from both male and female customers, but it was only the men who had their 'before and after' photographs published to accompany their testimonies (Sandow, 1901: 45-81.) The formalisation of amateur sport, but one outcome of the increasing support for regular physical exercise in Britain at the turn of the century, retained the effect of strictly dividing the bodily labour between the sexes, rendering sports' organisation and public exhibition as an overwhelmingly male preserve – as an activity *for* men and *by* men. In turn, examples such as

[96] "Physical Culture Exercises", professional card, *Clifton Society*, February 11th, 1909, pg. 11.
[97] Memo – Physical Training in Secondary Schools (Wellington School), Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A\DKH/1/11/.

Bryce's book show that physical culture drew extensively on the "potent imagery" of public-facing masculinity, to use historian Jeff Hearn's term (1992: 13.)

Secondly, the discourse of physical culture also presupposed a specific economic class, promoting an intra-masculine hierarchy along those lines. In other words, as the physical culture literature routinely sidelined women, it also implicitly arranged men into a vertical structure that discriminated between those that could achieve the required level of physical development and those that could not (or perhaps would not) based on the resources at their disposal. This was expressed through the consumerist language typically employed by physical culturists with products, courses and periodicals that it sold mostly inaccessible to the poorer classes. Muscle developers were sold at specialist businesses in Bristol for up to 12s 6d (estimated at around £64[98]); tickets to Sandow's 1898 show at the People's Palace changed hands for up to 2s 6d (around £12[99]). In essence, the odds of hitting this standard were stacked in favour of the middle and upper classes simply due to their access to the necessary resources and capital. Much like the exclusionary rhetoric of amateur sport, physical culture reproduced patriarchal values by foregrounding ideal presentations of masculinity above other male body types and pricing its attainment accordingly. As such, the marketing of physical culture and its array of products primarily targeted the aspirations of young professional men with disposable incomes.

In the context of male-predominant physical culture and its commercial edge, the following sections discuss how discourses of health and physical improvement were

[98] www.measuringworth.com, accessed January 18th, 2018. This is based on a Purchasing Power Calculator that compares commodity value between 1899 and 2015. This calculation does not take into account more complex economic factors such as wage growth or labour value.
[99] Ibid.

subsumed into popular entertainments through Sandow's example. In this way, there are three striking elements to the account of Sandow at the People's Palace that I will focus on in turn to unlock the significance of his performances and commercial legacy in Bristol. The first has already been mentioned; that is, the potential, if not inherent, theatricality of the strongman's body, constructed through sensationalist narratives off the stage and clever scenographic illusions on it. The extra-daily novelty of the theatricalised body could snag the audience's attention, feeding a scopic regime in fin-de-siècle popular entertainment that encouraged a 'stare' and not merely a glance. Secondly, his shows consciously made references to the neoclassical in the mould of popular *tableaux vivants*, meeting the counter-modern standard of 'looking-back' to historically iconic formulations of the Western male body. Finally, and in contradiction to the pre-modern references that his body cited, Sandow supplemented his spectacular performances by deliberately targeting the Bristol market. He achieved this through non-theatrical methods such as product placement, tailored courses of exercise and even the proposition of a body-building competition to take place in the city. These cross-disciplinary practices reveal Sandow to be a curiously paradoxical figure in that he promoted himself as an antidote to modern living whilst benefitting from that same economy of modernisation and trend-attentive commercialism.

Call and Stare

In the vein of much commercial variety entertainment so popular at the time, there was very little expense spared in the production of the live Sandow spectacle. This is indicated by the use of costume, props, stage apparatus and even, in Sandow's case, horses. This put

the strongman act closer to the signifying codes of circus, where exceptional or freakish bodies and the extra-human feats they performed drew on a wider popular fascination with monstrosity or evolutionary anomalies. For example, the Barnum and Bailey "Greatest Show on Earth" circus travelled to Bedminster in the summer of 1898 (only a few months after the Sandow visit) and in typically expressive style the programme introduced the company's "Countless Living Monstrosities, Human Curiosities and Wonders and Animal Freaks and Remarkable Objects" which included "The Dog-Faced Boy", "The Skeleton Dude" (supposedly the thinnest man ever born) and "Laloo and Lala", a young man with a vestigial twin sister that offered "to lovers of the curious A MOST INTERESTING SUBJECT FOR STUDY" [100].

The invitation to 'behold' and to 'study' spoke to a human predilection towards voyeurism, close to the Freudian concept of the 'scopophilic instinct' (cited in Mulvey, 2008: 16-17.) These extraordinary, extra-human bodies were framed in this way to prompt a more intensive manner of looking – the 'stare' – that challenged the beholder's pre-knowledge of normative human bodies, setting in motion a process where that novel experience could be rationalised. The bioethics scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson suggests that

> staring is a snagging of the eye by the novel. We are drawn by the unanticipated and the inexplicable in an effort to make sense of experience. We comfortably rely on the predictable, at the same time that we anxiously crave the unpredictable. Staring registers attraction at the same time that it witnesses confusion.

[100] Brochure for Barnum and Bailey, North Street near Bedminster Park, Bristol, 15-18 August, 1898, University of Bristol Theatre Collection, TC/M/373. Capitals in original.

(Garland-Thomson, 2006: 173-174)

Sandow, of course, cannot be classified as a 'freak' in quite the same sense. As discussed earlier, he had a degree of control over his self-presentation in his theatrical and literary outputs, (literally) exercising agency over his body and directly benefitting from its labours. This is in contrast to those 'employed' in the Barnum and Bailey sideshows or dime museums, an exploitative colonial practice that Roslyn Poignant has discussed in detail (Poignant, 2004: 8.) Nevertheless, his publicity copy adopted a comparable rhetoric, framing his body as "The Modern Hercules", "The Anatomical Wonder" and "The Monarch of Muscle" in the local presses [see Fig. 2.5.] This summoned a comparable mode of spectatorship to the circus in that it appealed to the 'anxious craving of the unpredictable or unusual'. Despite the reliance on props in Sandow's performances, the chief signifier of the acts remained the remarkable contours of the performing body itself and this was emphasised in all aspects of his marketing. Indeed, the reviewer of Sandow's performance referenced earlier marvelled at how his various routines 'brought into play the remarkable muscular outlines of the artiste', suggesting an intimate visual contract between the audience's gaze and the performer's invitation: 'come and stare'.

The spectacle of the human body became an immensely popular mode during the 'Sandow craze'. That he appealed to both theatrical and scientific disciplines alike spoke to the ubiquity of body-centric acts at the turn of the twentieth century as well as their profit-making potential. In his famous book *Strength and How to Obtain It* (1897) published during the same touring cycle and advertised in local papers including in Bristol, Sandow dedicated a short chapter to the content and the rationale behind his 'performances', detailing that the

first section of his acts was arranged explicitly for the posed demonstration of his immense muscularity:

> To begin with there is a tableau, arranged for the purpose of showing muscular repose, with all the muscles relaxed; muscular tension, with all the muscles as firm as steel; the abdominal muscles; the biceps, muscles of the upper arm; the triceps, muscles of the back of the arm; the deltoid, muscles of the shoulders; the trapezino muscles which raise the shoulders; the action and uses of different muscles; and the chest expansion, from 48ins normal to 62ins.
>
> (Sandow, 1897: 153)

As this account (literally) fleshes out the description given by the writer for the *Western Daily Press*, we get a sense here of repetition not only as a private, self-contained programme of exercise but as a theatrical convention in and of itself. In a reading of the embodied practices of wrestler and body-builder George Hackenschmidt, performance scholar Broderick Chow offers an alternative take on the overly Foucauldian view of the body as instrumentalised through repetition, emphasising the theatrical qualities of physical culture. Chow suggests that

> the pioneers of physical culture were not only strongmen, but showmen […] These performances of physical culture reframe the repetitions of it by ordinary men as themselves performative, making

> panoptic repetition something closer to rehearsal. Physical culture is thus not (only) a practice in which a body is disciplined to a norm, but one in which a subject engages in an active, agential process of (self)-construction.
>
> (Chow, 2015: 34)

Physical culture, then, had an inherently theatrical quality. This process of self-display where the theatricality of certain acts and gestures scripted through the performing body constructed Sandow as a spectacular object. In other words, his 'brand' was secured in the theatrical frame through a persistent doing and re-doing of his renowned muscular repertoire.

Look Back to Look Forward

The second point to make on Sandow is how his British tour at the beginning of 1898 reflected (or more accurately modified) the logic of 'counter-modernity', summed up by Forth: "arising with and in reaction to modernity, counter-modern impulses seek to renaturalize many of the things that modernity sends into motion, often by imagining a new modernity purged of its unhealthy or "feminizing" components" (Forth, 2008: 5). As referred to in the 'equilibrium' model in Chapter One, a key way in which Sandow and other strongman acts in the Victorian music hall could realise this impulse in performance was through neoclassical references, where the perfected (and normatively male) body could 'stand in' for the overall power and authority of Western civilization. This was partly aided by the evocative language used to advertise Sandow's music-hall engagements, with words such as 'monarch' and

performance venues named after palaces or coliseums resonating with the British arts' growing, even popular, interest in neoclassicism. These discourses regularly drew comparison between neoclassical imagery and male citizenship (Potts, 2007; Wyke, 1997) and their revival in arts and entertainment might be interpreted as a response to the primitivizing effects of modern existence, where previously secure knowledges on sex differences were starting to blur. More specifically, in Forth's exploration of the link between manhood and the dynamics between culture and science in Western societies around 1900, he suggests the influence of "degeneration discourses" on this cultural debate about sexual difference, insofar as they

> implied that the conditions of modern civilization created obstacles to the "natural" differentiation of the sexes that evolutionary theory promised. Through its very refinement, modernity seemed to promote a reversion to earlier stages of existence, whether through the narrowing gap between men and women or the physical debilities of elites.
>
> (Forth, 2008 : 146)

Whilst I will not be dwelling on the relationship between evolutionary theories and the way they were appropriated to justify male superiority, the conversation amongst elites that modern men no longer embodied a natural superiority and were receding into pre-civil behaviours may have indirectly fed the burgeoning of bodily spectacles in popular entertainment at the turn of the twentieth century. As we will see, however, these counter-

modern efforts are curious given their embedding in the commercial, come-and-see framework of popular entertainment.

The link between cultural representations of the male body and their appropriation to 'stand in' for and symbolize a well-functioning society has been most coherently outlined by cultural critic George Mosse. In *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (1996) Mosse traces the origins of revived interest in antiquarian masculinity back to the Enlightenment, referencing the influential work of the eighteenth-century German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann. As was the case with the amateur sporting events, Mosse also suggests the importance of 'equilibrium' to idealised masculinity as both a matter of physical development and as a moral imperative (though Mosse does not use these terms explicitly.) The ideals of strength and bodily harmony found in depictions of Ancient Greek *kouroi* (athletic youth), for instance, provided modernising Western cultures with a solid organising idea of manhood that could be expressed and re-expressed in the aesthetic imagination, crucial at a moment when pervading hierarchies of masculinity were fracturing under modern influences. On this point Mosse writes that

> modern society needed order, but it needed a certain dynamic as well. Social hierarchies were being challenged by the new forces unleashed by the industrial revolution with its new opportunities for commerce and manufacture, its new speed of communications. Here order and movement had to be reconciled, and "noble simplicity and quiet greatness" of Winckelmann's figures allowed for virility – a certain dynamic – as well as for the harnessing of any untoward movement through bodily harmony and proportion.

(Mosse, 1996: 35)

A parallel, then, might be drawn between Winckelmann's revived interest in the classical, Olympian male body and the presentation of Sandow's body on Bristol's biggest variety stage. The key term in Mosse's observation, it would seem, is 'harnessing' – an active verb that implies a process of controlling the material excesses of the body, exemplified by both Greek sculpture depicting *kouroi* (athletic youth) and Sandow's deliberate 'working-out' in performance (or the 'active, agential process of (self)-construction' that Chow describes). This demonstrates the role of culture – in this case, physical culture – in not just training up the body to a designated aesthetic standard but also to exhibit that body for public dissemination. A comparable early twentieth century performance practice that foregrounded the myth of perfect bodily standards was the *tableaux vivant,* or 'living picture', wherein "the body of the living model became a standardised set of mathematically calculated proportions, with figure types and poses self-consciously imitating sculptural prototypes" (Barrow, 2010: 219). *Tableaux vivants* and toga plays at the variety theatres invited the collaboration of fine artists to reconstruct famous scenes from antiquity, such as the romance between Antony and Cleopatra, where actors would pose in frozen dramatic 'tableaux' in imitation of Greco-Roman statuary. This is an interesting cross-reference to the 'classic selection' exhibited by Sandow given the tableaux's typical contexts as an amateur practice or domestic entertainment. Though there is little indication that tableaux were on the bills of South West *variety* performances per se – due to their commercial focus, the People's Palace in Bristol was more likely to programme the increasingly popular cinematograph pictures after 1900 - the emergence of the form marked the assimilation of classical antiquity into a more popular commercial terrain. Barrow goes on to comment that the many creative practices that made

up late-nineteenth century visual culture often relied on gender stereotypes, where the respective bodily ideals of men and women were strictly codified and binaristic:

> Pictorial imagery tended to portray women in terms of the virgin-whore dichotomy and for the classical-subject canvas, such stereotypes were imagined as innocent nymphs or *femmes fatales.* […] Classicizing popular theatre might have been progressive in its transgression of class boundaries, but it was also deeply conservative in its construction of gender.
>
> (Barrow, 2010: 211)

Though clearly in different terms, the 'classicizing' of the performed (or more accurately 'posed') male body on stage perpetuated masculine stereotypes that, as Barrow contests, re-affirmed a stratified view of gender differences. Though the popularisation of classical types certainly did not represent a progressive view of the sexes, and certainly did little to advance the narrow aesthetic depictions of women, the presentation of a strictly gendered physical type on stage allowed for the integration of a unified reference point for idealised manliness.

However, what complicates Sandow as a counter-modern agent is the practical difference between the 'classical selection' that opened his act and the more showman-like tricks that made up the rest of it. In effect, whilst his act opened with a sequence that emphasised the inherent aesthetic qualities of a perfected body and therefore resonated with the classical masculine type, the focus for the rest of the act was on how that body could function and achieve spectacular feats that the average man would not be able to emulate – taking a piano off stage with a man on top of it, for example. As I briefly mentioned earlier,

the live spectacle of these daring and expansive acts reflects an economy of looking more like the circus than the classical art gallery or museum. Witnessing performances with apparently high factors of physical difficulty or danger that the average person could not normally achieve invites not simply a 'gaze' but an apprehensive, captivated 'stare'. As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson eloquently puts it:

> what embodies the contingent, the unpredictable, the strange, the disordered prompts our stares as we seek to find order in apparent disarray. We may gaze at what we desire, but we stare at what astonishes us.
>
> (Garland-Thomson, 2006: 174)

A prompt to stare and 'make sense' of a temporarily disordered norm destabilises the counter-modern impulse in that stares are by their very definition elicited through unfamiliar or even disruptive experiences. Whilst the extent of fakery involved (if there was any at all) is unclear based on the biased and sometimes exaggerated accounts of Sandow's performances, there was nevertheless a focus here on spectacle and depicting in full view just how far a flesh-and-bone modern body could be pushed. This was no longer a question of a *return* to desirable and achievable 'equilibrium' so much as a testing of the very limits of modern humanity itself. In this capacity, Sandow's body is not only an aesthetic object that reacted against the softening and effeminising effects of late nineteenth century modernity. The penchant for the spectacular in strongman acts also appeared to move the classical masculine type *beyond* modernity altogether, framing the performing body as an extra-human object that possessed – or appeared to possess - unusual power and spatial mastery. In so doing, these stunts

constructed a version of humanity that had the potential to push or even transcend its natural, physical limits. Sandow's practices captured the fractured and contradictory nature of modern existence at the same time as he benefitted from - and marketed himself as a remedy to – that confusion. In turn, reading Sandow's performances as a consequence of modernity reveals that readings of the presented body during the theatrical encounter were just as contingent and unpredictable as the world outside, even if the classical repertoires on show were (at least on the surface) supposed to offer coherence and harmony.

Call and Buy It


ANDERSON'S BRISTOL RUBBER COMPANY, 9 & 10, HIGH STREET, BRISTOL.

If you are interested in SANDOW'S SYSTEM of PHYSICAL CULTURE, call at ANDERSON'S BRISTOL RUBBER CO., 9 & 10, HIGH STREET, and witness the *FREE* DEMONSTRATIONS by a Pupil of SANDOW on

SANDOW'S OWN COMBINED DEVELOPER,

THE CHEAPEST AND MOST PERFECT PHYSICAL EXERCISER,

(COMBINATION OF RUBBER EXERCISER AND DUMB-BELLS)

(PATENTED IN ALL COUNTRIES)

Invented by EUGEN SANDOW, THE WORLD'S MOST RENOWNED ATHLETE,

USED IN ALL HIS SCHOOLS OF PHYSICAL CULTURE.

ONE DEVELOPER FOR A WHOLE FAMILY, PRICE 12/6.

ANDERSON'S BRISTOL RUBBER COMPANY (Ye Waterproofers), 9 & 10, HIGH STREET. | Sandow's Pupil will Demonstrate Daily. Morning, 10.30 to 2.30; Afternoon, 3.30 to 7.

- Fig 2.3 - Advertisement in the *Western Daily Press for* Sandow's 'physical exerciser', March 1898.[101]

[101] "Anderson's Bristol Rubber Company", *Western Daily Press,* March 22nd, 1898, pg. 2. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

The third aspect of the presence of Sandow brand in the South West is that it brought to bear the commercial potential of the self-theatricalising male body. The continuation of his popularity at the turn of the twentieth was not only down to his impressive ability as a showman or athlete, as he appeared to be an extremely adept entrepreneur as well. Alongside his engagements at variety venues across the country and indeed across the world, it appears that Sandow made efforts to circulate his 'brand' within each city he toured to, collaborating with local businesses to engage the public in his work and in his range of exercise products. On the very same page of Bristol's *Western Daily Press* where the review of his engagement at the People's Palace appears – just two columns apart – was an advertisement for rubber 'combined developers' to which Sandow was attributed as inventor [see Fig 2.3] The boom in the synthetic rubber industry encapsulates the Sandow paradox. Rubber was at once a sturdy material that reflected a Herculean resilience to the natural elements (especially water) yet also could facilitate the expanded use of bicycles, a key emblem of 1890s British modernity (Beaven, 2005: 109-113)

As well as foregrounding the product itself, the Bristol rubber manufacturer with which Sandow had partnered hosted 'demonstrations' of the developer, facilitated especially by one of Sandow's 'pupils'. A year after Sandow's appearance at the People's Palace, Andersons Rubber Company on Bristol's High Street was visited by Mr J.A. Collard, invited to demonstrate the use of the new exercise equipment to prospective buyers[102]. There is an implicit performativity at work here through which the 'potent imagery' of Sandow's brand was still signified even in the absence of his material body. Included in *Strength and How to Obtain It* is a free-of-charge fold-out supplement dedicated to the unique features and

[102] "Sandow's Pupil is Here", *Bristol Times and Mirror,* December 14th, 1899, pg. 6.

appropriate use of these rubber developers alongside a family exercise chart. In this supplement, Sandow wrote that "the exercises are specially arranged by myself, introducing several of the movements in my system of development which cannot be properly executed on any other machine" (Sandow, 1897.) It is possible that a key aspect of Collard's in-store demonstration drew on the exercises outlined in Sandow's chart – in other words, the pupil performed a set of 'reps' that had been explicitly authored by Sandow himself. Through the demonstration of the product which bore Sandow's name as inventor and entrepreneur, the pupil *represented* Sandow short of actually *being* him, acting as a conduit through which Sandow's bodily repertoire was 'cited'. Each version of *Strength and How to Obtain It* – it was revised in 1901 - includes a gallery of some of Sandow's pupils that engaged with his exercise programme during his transatlantic tour and the expansion of his brand in Britain (see Sandow, 1898 : 72-81.) Though there are no examples of Bristolian or South West customers in either edition, this imagery nevertheless underlines the point about surrogate bodies dispersed throughout the world as a core aspect of the marketing strategy. They adopt poses that reproduce Sandow's s self-construction of his muscularity, either folding their arms and directly looking to the viewer or are 'petrified' mid-flex, with each showing off the fruits of the dedicated Sandow course. Amongst those surrogate Sandows was his alleged lover, the Dutch composer Martinus Sieveking, adding further complexity to the economy of looking in the age of masculine spectacle (Brauer, 2017: 46.)

I AM ESTABLISHED IN BRISTOL.

EUGEN SANDOW.

Up to the present it has not been possible for me to personally prescribe my curative treatment for the thousands in Bristol and district who have written for advice, but have been unable to call and see me at my London consulting rooms. I have now, however, opened consulting rooms in 36, Park Street, Bristol, where my advice regarding health matters may be obtained.

I ask you to-day to call at these offices and let me have the fullest particulars of your case, when I will prescribe an individual course of curative exercises for you personally.

As a health expert I have been very successful, and have shown thousands the way to health and strength. My pledge to you is that your ailment is not an incurable one. *'I guarantee to pass you as a first-class life.'* That is, to bring you to such a pitch of physical perfection and health and strength that you will pass unrestricted the severest physical test possible.

My offer appeals particularly (1) to the business man, whose success depends on health; (2) to the man who has to pass a medical examination for insurance or the professions; (3) to ladies who desire to retain their figure and their health; (4) to those who have the charge of children; (5) and to all who suffer in any way. To these a copy of my last book will be sent free of charge on application. Should you then feel I can benefit you, and I know I can, I ask you to call on my Bristol manager, who will take particulars of your case and forward them to me in London. I will then plan your course, and my manager will show you how to correctly carry out my instructions. Remember I *personally* plan your course.

Write me now for full particulars and a copy of my book.

EUGEN SANDOW, 36, PARK STREET, BRISTOL.

- Fig 2.4 - Classified advertisement for the opening of a Sandow drop-in clinic on Park Street, Bristol, 1906.[103]

The phenomenon of the *idea* of Sandow's body in the absence of his actual body ultimately appears key to his commercial strategy. The advertisement announcing the opening of a clinic on Park Street in Bristol lead with the headline 'I am Established in Bristol', even though that physical 'I' as the marketing copy goes on to describe was actually based in his London office [see Fig 2.4]. Furthermore, as if driving home his presence as a 'brand' in the city, Sandow's company advertised "The Sandow Prize Competition" a few months after

[103] "I am Established in Bristol", *Western Daily Press*, October 30th 1906, pg. 9. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

his performance at the People's Palace, renewing his partnership with Anderson's Bristol Rubber Company [see Fig 2.5]. The advertisement published in the *Western Daily Press* in November 1898 invited men to participate with the promise of significant financial reward "For the Man who is adjudged to be the most Perfectly Developed"[104]. The first prize of £500 – estimated at around £50,000 in today's money[105] – is a testament to the sort of prestige that these events and the brand of Sandow himself would have had. With an overall prize pot of around £580 it seems likely that some men in the region would have at least been tempted to put their names forward.

However, there is no obvious evidence such an event took place in Bristol. The advertisement states 'proposes to hold' as opposed to 'will hold', perhaps implying that the competition was conditional on interest or, indeed, on whether there were enough men in the area that could actually hope to meet that prizeworthy level of 'development'. Having said this, Sandow-sponsored events of this sort apparently went ahead in other parts of the country in subsequent years, each proceeding with a distinctive theatrical flourish. A professional card of a performer known as 'Murray' published in *The Stage* at the turn of the century boasts the credential 'Sandow Prize winner' as a way of adding gloss to his "Classical Act Unexampled by its Refined and Up-to-date Originality", further entrenching Sandow's status as pioneer of body-centric popular entertainments in the country[106]. This exemplified the conscious integration of classical models of masculinity to formulate a modern and distinctly theatrical practice of 'physical development'. Similarly, the national final of the Sandow Prize competition took place at the Albert Hall, Leeds in 1903, where ten competitors "nude save

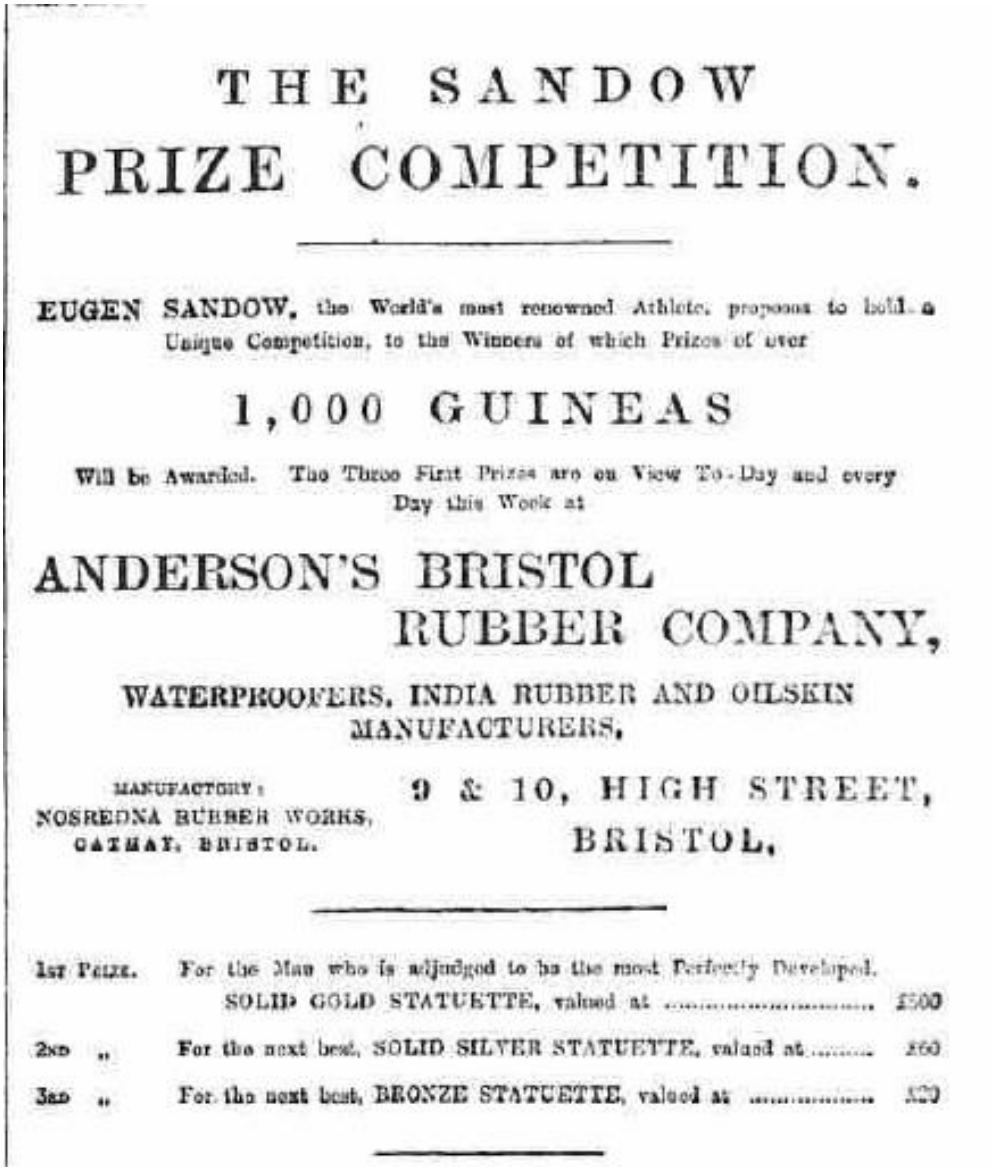
[104] Ibid.

[105] https://www.measuringworth.com/m/calculators/ukcompare/, accessed January 30th, 2018.

[106] "The Variety Stage – Professional Cards – Murray", *The Stage*, March 26th 1903, pg. 16.

for loin cloths […] were required to pose in a variety of positions with a view to best their muscular development". Most of the participants came from the North or the Midlands (the competitor from Swansea was the closest to the South West to qualify) with the top £500 prize going to a former drill instructor from Leicestershire[107]. In a not dissimilar way to the in-house demonstrator at the rubber company, these men and their bodies operated as signs that entrenched Sandow as the ultimate referent of masculine development. His clever branding practices were so effective that he could vicariously secure his image as a dominant figurehead of male physical development through the efforts and presentations of *other men's* bodies. Though we cannot tie the official competitions to Bristol or anywhere in the South West due to a lack of decisive evidence, the use of column inches in the local presses at the very least indicates that Sandow's 'brand' was in circulation in the region where through some targeted marketing strategies he could sell his vision of physical development to interested parties in Bristol and the surrounding area.

[107] "Beauty Show: Perfect Man and Woman", *Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury*, 20th November 1903, pg. 8. There are a couple of telling side notes to this article. Firstly, the fact that the term 'beauty show' is used to describe the event instead of a more direct and forceful term like 'body-building contest' suggests a central focus on the aesthetic qualities of the musculature and not necessarily on what those muscles could *do* – there doesn't appear to be any ripping of full decks of cards as part of the competition, for example. Secondly, the show included a division for ladies, which the writer somewhat dismissively regards as "not in the natural order of things". However, the winner of this event moved on to compete in a global final in New York along with her male counterpart, indicating that the bodily stereotyping otherwise on show in popular forms of entertainment were in some cases being deconstructed, and on an international stage to boot.



THE SANDOW
PRIZE COMPETITION.

EUGEN SANDOW, the World's most renowned Athlete, proposes to hold a Unique Competition, to the Winners of which Prizes of over

1,000 GUINEAS

Will be Awarded. The Three First Prizes are on View To-Day and every Day this Week at

ANDERSON'S BRISTOL RUBBER COMPANY,

WATERPROOFERS, INDIA RUBBER AND OILSKIN MANUFACTURERS,

MANUFACTORY: NOSREDNA RUBBER WORKS, CATHAY, BRISTOL.

9 & 10, HIGH STREET, BRISTOL.

1st Prize. For the Man who is adjudged to be the most Perfectly Developed. SOLID GOLD STATUETTE, valued at £500

2nd „ For the next best, SOLID SILVER STATUETTE, valued at £60

3rd „ For the next best, BRONZE STATUETTE, valued at £20

- Fig 2.5 – Advertisement in the *Western Daily Press* inviting local interest for "The Sandow Prize Competition", November 1898.[108]

This is perhaps the most important factor to the Sandow brand in Bristol and the wider South West: his was a 'professional body' handsomely paid for its labour. This nicely summarises the essentially ambivalent politics around the Sandow craze and his performances. Whilst he was lauded for his physical brilliance and ability to promote the

[108] "The Sandow Prize Competition", *Western Daily Press*, November 24th, 1898, pg. 7. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

benefits of regular physical exercise (for both men and women alike) there remained an essentially commercial edge to his practices, feeding a system that ultimately benefitted a certain demographic "while relegating [others] to the realm of perpetual clerkdom", in Christopher Forth's words (2008 : 142.) The late Victorian aesthetic imagination prized Ancient Greek ideals of masculinity to "embody various reactionary models of a simple, healthy subjectivity to be cultivated by the male citizen" (Potts, 2007: 170-171.) However, with the moral discourses of physical improvement becoming increasingly conflated with early twentieth century consumer culture, this embodied form of male citizenship would be most readily applicable to men who had the financial capacity to invest free time and money in programmes of physical development. The Sandow brand, so embedded in those classical signifiers, did not therefore reliably *ensure* the physical improvement of its audiences, in the South West or anywhere. What was of primary importance was bringing 'grist to the mill' and punters through the doors. The institutions through which the Sandow brand was circulated and performed cared little for *how* the product was consumed or what sorts of desires were satisfied after its purchase; its central concern was that a purchase took place to begin with.

This double logic has some significant implications for the complex interplay between looking, desire and the presentation of bodies in the spectacular framework, particularly when that framework is sustained by the dominant knowledges of value, exchange and capital that would become increasingly important to South West popular entertainment. On the one hand Sandow was sold to potential spectators as a 'wonder' and a 'monarch', and this was realised through his unique combination of quasi-Herculean poses and circus-like stunts on-stage. In practice the readings of his body may have diverged from that representation and were dependent on the desires or ideological investments of his beholders. His de-robed

muscular body may have variously attracted disgust, humour[109] or even, as the art scholar Fae Brauer has suggested, queer desire (Brauer, 2018: 35.) On these unpredictable readings, Peggy Phelan acknowledges that

> representation follows two laws: it always conveys more than it intends; and it is never totalizing. The "excess" meaning conveyed by representation creates a supplement that makes multiple and resistant readings possible.
>
> (Phelan, 1993: 2)

Representation, then, is part of the logic of consumption and production that underpins the relationship between the looker and the looked-at: just as we are drawn to what we lack, we are also drawn to what is novel and unusual in order to self-reflexively assure ourselves of our normativity. Perhaps Sandow and his promoters recognised this principle too. Quite apart from the apparent 'open secret' of Sandow's sexuality, the muscular, self-controlled and extra-human ideal of man as conveyed by Sandow invited responses that may have undermined the Western civilised (and implicitly heterosexual) ideal of manhood. In short, the pretensions to inoculate audiences against the threats of modern existence mattered little in the spectacular framework, as that framework rested upon an audience's willingness to invest

[109] There is some evidence from the South West that the strongman spectacle was the subject of parody on variety stages in the years around Sandow's British tour. A couple of examples include The Curty Bros engaged at the People's Palace in November 1900 who were "very funny in their burlesque wrestling act" ("Amusements", *Western Daily Press,* November 6th 1900, pg. 7.) and a 'match' between two characters called Bardenburg and Danbystein as part of variety performer Wilkie Bard's charity football game at Bristol Rovers' Eastville Ground ("Football – Mr Wilkie Bard's Team vs. The Bristol Licensed Trade", *Bristol Magpie,* March 10th 1904, pg. 14.)

their time, attention and money in the spectacle. They bought the right to engage with – or in cruder terms, to *consume* - the displayed body in a way that spoke to their personal desires.

In this chapter I have taken into account how the male body was framed in the context of South West popular entertainment and how this may have encouraged a complex economy of looking, gazing and staring. The body in this sense could represent an ideological surface that invited beholders to project their anxieties, desires or prejudices. Those desires circulating through the house during the variety bodily spectacles adhered to the logic of consumption, allowing Sandow to position himself as a canny entrepreneur under the guise of a moral crusade. The success of Sandow and others to master a whole range of social and cultural practices (including George Hackenschmidt, whose appearances in Bristol as a wrestler-showman introduce the next chapter) is a testament to the shapeshifting tendencies of capitalism. As political theorist Nigel Thrift suggests, "capitalism has a kind of unholy vitality, a kind of double duty, to possess but also to create, to accumulate but also to overflow, to organise but also to improvise" (Thrift, 2005: 17.) To apply this mechanism to the production of the patriarchal order, the commercial underpinnings of South West popular entertainment cultures both 'sold' the idea of a desirable masculinity – as per the remit of physical culture, a fit and well-proportioned body was linked with success in business or in work in general – at the same time as it invited a range of responses to reflect shifting market demand and the multiplicity of consumer tastes.

In the following chapter, I will be considering a performance practice that complicated the dynamic between masculinity and spectacle still further. With its roots in regional tradition and recreation, wrestling underwent a transition from the 'field' to the 'stage' at the beginning of the twentieth century, to use cultural historian Benjamin Litherland's distinction (2015). Whilst it retained its strict observation of rules and regulations (though stipulated on

a bespoke, match-by-match basis) this transition of the serious business of sport to the spectacular context laid bare tensions between the discriminatory ideologies of the 'amateur ethos' on the one hand and popular tastes on the other. Not only did this produce a new mode in which the practising male body could be presented – the toils and physical exertions of local wrestlers' bodies temporarily 'stood in' for civic pride – but it also ran parallel to the expansion of "male leisure" at the turn of the twentieth century where theatre and other forms of live performance competed with the increased appeal of commercial sport to working men and boys (Beaven, 2005: 44.) Alongside the bodily spectacles pioneered by Sandow, wrestling matches as part of variety evenings signalled potential for spectator sport and the theatre to amalgamate and produce a novel, live spectacle that was borne out of shifting popular tastes. In describing the new fascination with wrestling spectacles on the stage, the anonymous writer for the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* in 1904 used a word that captured both the fragmentary nature of fin-de-siècle popular leisure as well as the unpredictable transformation of British society at large: he anointed this new trend a 'craze'.[110]

[110] "The Wrestling Craze", *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News,* January 23rd 1904.

THREE

Wrestling: Sport, Spectacle and Local Knowingness

- Fig 3.1 – Russian wrestler George Hackenschmidt in an advertisement for sport supplement "Phosferine – The Remedy of Kings", reproduced in a range of provincial newspapers, 1905.[111]

[111] "The Triumphs of Hackenschmidt", *Western Daily Press*, May 16th, 1905, pg. 9. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

On September 7th 1905, the 28-year-old champion wrestler of the world George Hackenschmidt made his first appearance in Bristol. He was engaged for a week at the city's Empire Theatre[112] before moving on to the nearby Boscombe Hippodrome in Dorset to fight Austrian challenger Eugene Muller[113]. He had had extensive coverage in the South West presses before his arrival in the city, notably an enthusiastic report on a World Championship fight against Turkish wrestler Ahmad Madrali at the Oxford Music Hall in London in January 1904[114]. His celebrity reputation was utilised in an evocative advertising campaign for "nerve-repairing tonic" Phosferine that circulated to a number of local presses across the region, including those in Bristol [see Fig 3.1.] The alert, defensive posture as depicted in the advert, not to mention the flexing of his extraordinary biceps and quadriceps, offered regular newspaper readers a glimpse into a meticulously crafted and focussed masculinity, with Hackenschmidt's body appearing garlanded by the names of his conquests to emphasise his status as undisputed champion.

A key aspect of his extensive international touring was the issuing of challenges to either fellow international wrestlers or - perhaps remarkably given the extensive training required to emulate Hackenschmidt's physical fitness - local men. This latter practice was part of a unique spectacular framework that blurred the barriers between celebrity and fans, professional and amateur, with Hackenschmidt and his team designing these matches to make local challengers "look good for a while before throwing them" according to historian Michael Tripp's entry in the Oxford DNB (Tripp, 2004) Known evocatively in music-hall

[112] *Bristol Magpie,* September 7th 1905.
[113] "Hackenschmidt at Boscombe", *Bournemouth Daily Echo,* September 19th 1905, pg. 3.
[114] "Wrestling", *Western Daily Press,* January 5th 1904; Thomas, H., "One and All Notes", *Cornishman,* January 21st 1904, pg. 4.

circles as "the Russian Lion" thanks to the input of impresario C.B. Cochran (Tripp, 2004) Hackenschmidt's eclectic practices as a sportsman, showman and entrepreneur have been the subject of some fascinating critical attention, including in the field of performance history (Chow, 2015; Litherland, 2015.) Echoing themes brought to bear through Sandow, this scholarship has focussed variously on spectacle, repetition as a theatrical quality (i.e. the 'reps' of physical exercise) and the interface between Hackenschmidt's on-and-off stage personas. Less covered are responses to Hackenschmidt's celebrity at more granular geographical levels, particularly in Britain where there were a range of interpretations of wrestling as a sport, and significantly so in the South West.

As the source material drawn on in this chapter indicates, Hackenschmidt became to wrestling what Sandow was to bodybuilding and physical culture: a global referent against which all subsequent, comparable practices were measured. His career trajectory in the first decade of the twentieth century responded to ongoing developments in both middle- and working-class leisure, where commercial sport was offering a more immediate and unpredictable medium for the region's pleasure-seekers. Wrestling had an idiosyncratic adaptation from its origins on the sporting field to the stage, where sportsmen/artists such as Hackenschmidt blended the moralising amateur ethos with a popular taste for the extraordinary. Situated within the same spectacular, commercially driven performance culture that consolidated Sandow's fame, the focusses of this chapter are twofold. Firstly, it will consider the extent to which the serious and traditional sporting business of wrestling was compromised (or perhaps enhanced) by the spectacular variety context, particularly when challenge matches would often feature on playbills alongside the more standard music-hall fare of comedians, singers and trapeze artists. Secondly, given the practice's core principle

of audience participation that built on the music hall's key convention of 'knowingness' (Bailey, 1998: 128) I will explore how the heavily gendered 'spectacular regime' of popular entertainment facilitated a sense of civic pride through the challenger format. The participating bodies on display in amateur-professional challenge matches were embedded in a signifying code that foregrounded the pride of a local community: in this case the Bristol neighbourhood of Knowle.

Grist to the Mill: Local Tradition Before and During the Wrestling Craze

In the South West of England, wrestling matches at the amateur level were most commonly 'staged' at army barracks as part of military training [115] or were regularly performed as a local custom. With regards to the latter, the rules, regulations and styles of wrestling could vary by region, and in the case of the South West there were even intra-regional distinctions. For example, as I will come on to, there were important differences between the Cornish and Devonian styles. The rivalry between the neighbouring counties in the sport had longstanding historical roots, as mythologised by a famous bout in 1826 between Cornishman James Polkinghorne and Devon's Abraham Cann that took place in the Plymouth maritime district of Devonport[116]. Its significance to local legend situated wrestling as a key part of masculine recreation, and the sport continued to be emblematic of civic pride and community tradition through to the turn of the twentieth century. The Cornish presses at this time reveal the significance of physical competition between men and boys, with many

[115] "Wrestling at Barnstaple – A Fine Exhibition", *North Devon Journal*, January 3rd 1907, n.p.
[116] "Grand Wrestling Match – Devonport, Oct 23rd", *Sailsbury and Winchester Journal*, October 28th, 1826, n.p.

descriptions of 'fights' organised on a purely recreational basis. This included a tragic incident in 1902 where a young man accidentally killed his brother during a particularly feisty, though fundamentally friendly, practice bout[117]. Whether as part of military training or as part of local male leisure, it appears that wrestling as an amateur pursuit had an immediate community-building effect comparable to the municipal projects outlined in Chapter One. However, in the context of masculine spectacle in the South West, it is especially interesting to explore how wrestling matches featured at variety theatres or in other entertainment venues where they became one of a range of spectacular acts that sat alongside jugglers, impersonators and musicians on the bills. These celebrity wrestlers would on some occasions give demonstrations comparable to the 'classical selections' *à la* Sandow[118] or, in the case of German wrestler Peter Gotz, would offer masterclasses into the sport of wrestling as part of longer residencies in cities like Bristol[119]. This had the effect of constructing the fights beyond their typical ludic framework of recreational sport and into the realm of entertainment (or even, in true Sandow style, into the realm of branding.)

Coverage of variety wrestling in the South West presses began in approximately 1901 with a report of a best-of-three bout at Bristol's People's Palace between the Cornish-American Jack Carkeek and Scottish physical culturist William Bankier (whose stage name was "Apollo – The Scottish Hercules")[120]. These reports recurred frequently through the first decade of the twentieth century. However, despite its relatively brief boom, wrestling attracted eager

[117] "Fatal Wrestling Match Between Two Brothers", *Cornish and Devon Post*, September, 13th 1902, pg, 6.
[118] "The Art of Wrestling – Interviews with George Hackenschmidt and Ahmet Madrali", *The Bournemouth Graphic,* September 28th, 1905, pg 198-199.
[119] "Naval Fete and Bazaar – Great Attraction at the Clifton Zoo", *Western Daily Press,* July 5th, 1906, pg. 9.
[120] "Wrestling Match at the People's Palace", *Western Daily Press*, May 4th 1901, n.p.

audiences in the region during this heyday and was enhanced by endorsement from key social institutions such as the military[121]. What was additionally distinctive about this context for wrestling was its conscious blurring of the lines between the serious business of sport and spectacular showmanship. Despite the matches themselves being conducted according to strictly observed regulations, it is nevertheless curious that these highly competitive acts would be part of an evening's variety entertainment and not always as stand-alone events in themselves. With these conditions in mind, the wrestling ring as a performance space can be read as a dialogic arena between the celebrity and the amateur, between one community and another and even between distinct cultural forms, in this case sport and theatre.

To get a sense of the theatrical qualities of wrestling, it is worth briefly outlining the distinguishing features of the sport itself as they were understood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is notable that wrestling at the time was undergoing a process of cultural adaptation where distinctive local traditions of the sport were amalgamating on intra-regional, intra-national, and international levels to the point where sometimes quite precious local customs were seen to blur. Whilst this did not yet lead to the creation of a singular homogenous style, this factor of cross-cultural dialogue demonstrates the adaptability of these wrestling styles to suit many competitive and theatrical contexts. A concise summary of each of the most prominent styles of the sport were collated by the "Late Honorary Secretary of The Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Society" Walter Armstrong in his book *Wrestling* published in 1890, which offered an insight into the rules, technicalities and significance of those styles to the communities from which they originated. In his book,

[121] An example of this is a match between Gilbert vs. Rooke at Barnstaple football ground in 1907, in which both men were sailors in Devonport Barracks. *The Bideford Weekly Gazette,* January 1st 1907, pg. 5.

Armstrong outlines in exact technical detail eight different wrestling subcultures prevalent in the latter parts of the nineteenth century, including three originating in England: the Cornish and Devonshire styles, the Lancashire style and the Cumberland and Westmorland style. Armstrong described the latter as "the proper one to graduate in", perhaps unsurprisingly given his affiliation to the North West (Armstrong, 1890: 1.)

Importantly, Armstrong's survey laid bare the tensions implicit in regional identity, and how these identities may have themselves been realised through the assemblage of particular rules, moves or costume. His description of the respective Cornish and Devonian styles suggests a particularly high level of antagonism between the two counties with Armstrong perhaps hyperbolically describing it as 'deadly':

> A north-country wrestler has been known to be welcomed [in Cornwall] with open arms; whereas, among the rural population in the wrestling districts, a Devonian has often been received with a shower of brickbats.
>
> (Armstrong, 1890: 18)

Part of this hostility, Armstrong suggests, may have stemmed from practical disagreements. Whereas both required each participant to wear a loose jacket that aided the catching of holds (in contrast to the Cumberland style which stipulated "well-fitting and becoming costumes", apparently so as to not compromise the "delicacy" of female witnesses to the fight) the unique feature of Devonian wrestling was the allowance for kicking. Armstrong frowned upon this kind of tactic, as he felt it undermined the sport's gentlemanly principles and took it into an unappealingly violent terrain:

> As kicking, however, was never fashionable in Cornwall, the fact of a Cornishman in an encounter with a Devonian occasionally having a considerable area of skin sliced from his shins by a pair of formidable shoes, made of hard baked leather, supplemented by a piece of sheet iron, may have something to do with the inveterate quarrel between the wrestlers of the two counties.
>
> (Armstrong, 1890: 18)

Aside from his criticism of the overly fierce rivalry between the two counties, Armstrong proposed that a further limitation to *both* West Country styles was the ambiguity of the 'fair back fall' rule. This meant that the bout was won only if a competitor had pinned both shoulders of his opponent to the ground, doing away with the 'points' system adopted in the Cumberland mode. Armstrong pointed out, perhaps quite rightly, that this rule drew Cornish and Devonian fights out for too long and that the distinction between winner and loser would sometimes be ambiguous. The 'fair back fall' rule, in other words, allowed a weaker opponent to play for a draw even if he had been out-manoeuvred by his opponent for the majority of the fight (1890: 21-22.) Nevertheless, it is striking how the specific holds and permissible moves varied at the regional level within Britain. This appears to be quite a direct example of how regional identity was not just contingent on geographical boundaries but that it could actually be *embodied* and expressed through that body when displayed in the live moment. With a defined signature style that had historical, regional roots, a competitor could 'practise' a certain repertoire of gestures and holds through their bodies, with that repertoire centrally dictated by local custom and tradition. In turn, this association of fighting style with regional identity had the effect of organising local audiences as defined communities and

cementing proud historical tradition in its public display. By way of the sport's transition onto the South West's popular stages, this attractive symbol of civic pride had a significant effect on the way in which the audience identified themselves as part of the challenge matches. As I will come on to, this unique performer-audience interpellation was especially pronounced within the amateur-professional interface of the challenge matches.

As cultural historian Benjamin Litherland has identified, wrestling as a spectator sport had an unusual evolution from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, particularly in comparison to other sports such as football, cricket and boxing (Litherland, 2015: 91.) One of the most decisive factors in this regard is that British wrestling generally resisted the trend of formalisation that these other sports were subject to, avoiding the stipulation of universal rules and the establishment of centralised governing bodies. This had two important, interconnected consequences. Firstly, the principle of amateurism and by extension the figure of the 'gentleman amateur' that was so crucial to organisations such as the Amateur Athletic Association was not automatically adhered to. Secondly, and linked to the scepticism of amateurism, British wrestling retained its local specificity even as it made the transition onto the popular stage[122]. In the years around 1900, the sport continued with localised organisation as a way of upholding community heritage, and this remains the case in Cornwall today (see Tripp, 2014). By necessity, this made any attempt at an 'amateurist' regulation of the sport undesirable if not anathema to its established character, particularly in the context of intra-regional tensions and the well-held tradition of financial reward for the victor.

[122]"Wrestling in the Devonshire Style", *Western Times,* November 11th, 1904, n.p.

In the context of this rejection of the amateur ethos, it is unclear at what precise point wrestling demonstrations or challenge matches became integrated into variety entertainment contexts in the South West, as the sport's independent spirit allowed the process of its theatrical adaptation to be somewhat organic. An article from 1904 in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* suggested that Jack Carkeek was the first to bring the wrestling challenge match into the British music hall, and that its initial success in London in 1900 inspired subsequent provincial touring[123]. As mentioned above, the first reference to a bout between established wrestler-showmen in the South West - Carkeek and Apollo - appears in 1901, with the former "taking the verdict after a very interesting struggle"[124]. A possible explanation for the sport's sudden – and relatively short-lived - appearance in popular performance cultures in the South West is that the corporate arrangement of some of the larger variety theatres in the region (most notably the 3,000-seater People's Palace in Bristol run by the Livermore Brothers) consistently sought to engage the most attractive and 'up-to-date' acts. As such, the inclusion of wrestling on the bills of South West live entertainment was simply a consequence of shifting tastes and fashions to match other halls in the country. Linked to this, there was also the decisive factor of commercial opportunity, with provincial theatrical managers wanting to take advantage of what was dubbed by London periodicals as the "Wrestling Craze". In a column with that title, the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* particularly highlighted that the interest in the sport was due first and foremost to clever theatrical entrepreneurship and not necessarily increased participation in the sport itself. Its writer lamented that

[123] "The Wrestling Craze – Its Culmination", *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, January 30th 1904, pg. 4.
[124] "Wrestling Match at the People's Palace", *Western Daily Press*, May 4th 1901, n.p.

> knowing with what eagerness the British public rush off to see some new thing it was a brilliant showman's idea, on the part of the astute individual who first conceived it, to bring together in London a troupe of the world's strong men, and set them to wrestle at places of entertainment. It would possibly be more correct to say that it is the non-athletic portion of the public who bring grist to the mill, just as it is the people who cannot perform the simplest gymnastic feat who go to see acrobats go through performances which make the amateur athlete shudder.[125]

This reading suggested that the 'wrestling craze' was predicated on commercial opportunity, overlooking the rhetoric of self-improvement prized by the AAA and the physical culturists. The above report suggests that the new prominence of wrestling catered primarily for 'non-athletic' customers seeking an exciting sporting spectacle or even just a 'laugh', rather than those who had a passionate attachment to the traditional aspect of wrestling as a peer-facing community practice.

As such, the sport's appropriation onto the variety stage was not without its critics. Some believed that the formation of a national amateur body was the only way for wrestling to rediscover its 'proper' historical traditions in gentlemanly conduct and well-observed sportsmanship. These rules and unspoken agreements, it was claimed, were obfuscated or completely lost in the spectacular variety context. In 1908, the chairman of the newly-

[125] "The Wrestling Craze", *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News,* January 23rd, 1904, pg. 874.

established National Amateur Wrestling Association Percy Longhurst commented in London-based *Sporting Life* that

> the music hall exhibitions have given the London public a totally false impression of wrestling. Without any hesitation I say that the majority of displays on the stage are not contests at all. Wrestling ought not to be a spectacular show, and I am strongly opposed to it. The public are fond of wrestling, but have no great knowledge thereof, and in the past have welcomed the travesty of it that has been forced upon them.[126]

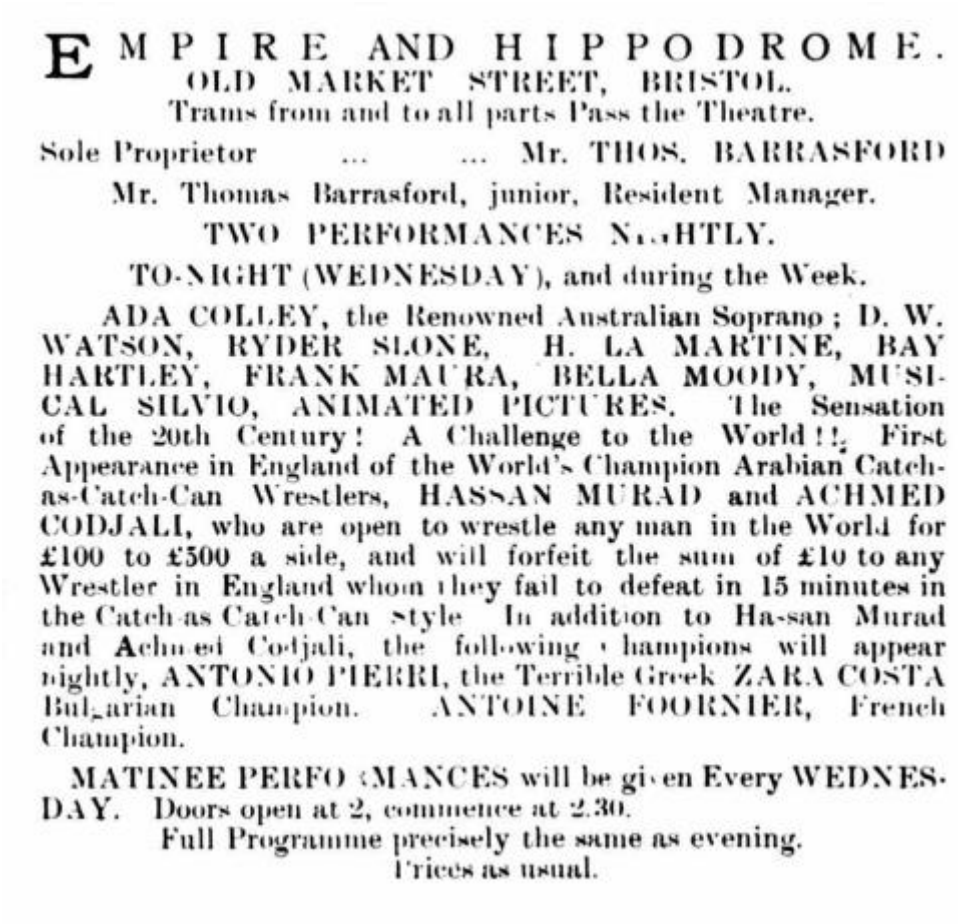
These 'spectacular shows' were even connected to a discourse of moral panic around youth leisure (see Springhall, 1998) with the *Bristol Times and Mirror* and *Gloucestershire Echo* each reprinting a cautionary tale about a ten-year-old boy in London who had died from "peritonitis set up by a ruptured appendix" after a schoolmate had landed on his abdomen during a playful wrestling bout. The *Mirror* noted that "the coroner remarked that wrestling was quite a craze among boys"[127] with the *Echo* going so far as to declare that "the present mania for wrestling is responsible"[128]. The popular appeal of wrestling and the enthusiasm children had for emulating moves they saw in periodicals or on the stage laid bare the reservations that critics had of the 'field to the stage' transition.

Despite Longhurst's observations about the troubling repercussions of wrestling spectacles, the evidence available on wrestling as part of specifically South West popular

[126] 'A Special Correspondent' - "Wrestling – The Question of Styles – Mr P Longhurst & History – Origin of Catch-as-Catch-Can", *Sporting Life,* February 15th, 1908, pg. 8.
[127] "Fatal Result of the Wrestling Craze", *Bristol Times and Mirror,* April 28th, 1904, pg. 10.
[128] "News Siftings", *Gloucestershire Echo,* April 28th 1904, pg. 3.

entertainment suggests that a serious observation of prior-agreed rules and styles was still in place despite its orientation in a theatrical variety context. This could partly be explained by the importance of wrestling to regional identity, especially in Cornwall. Though Bristol was certainly a key destination for national or even international music-hall stars as evidenced by playbills for the People's Palace and the Empire Theatre, its proximity to the traditional wrestling locales of Cornwall and Devon coupled with the region's strong military presence may have impelled producers to limit the act's more expressly theatrical qualities. Though I will be looking at these conventions in more detail in the case of Tom McInerney, wrestling matches as popular entertainment still retained a certain etiquette. This included a formal challenge issued by the 'champion' or star with defined prize monies in the respective cases of a draw or an outright victory (the latter rarely exceeding £50); a formal approach from the challenger agreeing to the terms; and a referee overseeing proceedings, usually engaged from the military. For example, a match between Peter Gotz and Bristolian Fred Luffman in 1906 was refereed by a captain in the Voluntary Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment.[129]

[129] "Amusements and Exhibitions – Empire & Hippodrome", *Western Daily Press,* August 4th 1906, pg. 4.



EMPIRE AND HIPPODROME.
OLD MARKET STREET, BRISTOL.
Trams from and to all parts Pass the Theatre.
Sole Proprietor ... ... Mr. THOS. BARRASFORD
Mr. Thomas Barrasford, junior, Resident Manager.
TWO PERFORMANCES NIGHTLY.
TO-NIGHT (WEDNESDAY), and during the Week.
ADA COLLEY, the Renowned Australian Soprano; D. W. WATSON, RYDER SLONE, H. LA MARTINE, BAY HARTLEY, FRANK MAURA, BELLA MOODY, MUSICAL SILVIO, ANIMATED PICTURES. The Sensation of the 20th Century! A Challenge to the World!!! First Appearance in England of the World's Champion Arabian Catch-as-Catch-Can Wrestlers, HASSAN MURAD and ACHMED CODJALI, who are open to wrestle any man in the World for £100 to £500 a side, and will forfeit the sum of £10 to any Wrestler in England whom they fail to defeat in 15 minutes in the Catch-as-Catch-Can style. In addition to Hassan Murad and Achmed Codjali, the following Champions will appear nightly, ANTONIO PIERRI, the Terrible Greek ZARA COSTA Bulgarian Champion. ANTOINE FOORNIER, French Champion.
MATINEE PERFORMANCES will be given Every WEDNESDAY. Doors open at 2, commence at 2.30.
Full Programme precisely the same as evening.
Prices as usual.

- Fig 3.2 - Advertisement in the *Bristol Magpie* for programme at the Empire Theatre, Bristol, including a series of international wrestlers appearing alongside other variety fare, July 1903.[130]

Adaptation: Between Sport and Spectacle

Despite the seemingly measured blend of theatricality and sporting values on the South West stages, there was at least some effort to adapt the typical conventions of a wrestling bout to suit the spectacular framework. There are three key features of this adaptation: the on-stage personas of the performers; the spatial configuration; and the acts'

[130] "Empire and Hippodrome", *Bristol Magpie,* July 18th, 1903, pg. 17. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

scenographic features (most significantly costume.) Firstly, as with most competitive sport, the construction of 'character' in these acts contributed to a quasi-dramatic narrative that framed how the competitors were respectively signified, inviting certain relationships with audiences. In touch with the serious and rule-bound origins of the sport, star wrestlers were most commonly billed as 'Champions' in their specialist styles, weight classes or locations. This is the case for "Champion Catch-as-catch-can Wrestler of the World" Maurice Mecklevich [sic] in his 1904 appearance in Exeter as part of Tom Cannon's wrestling troupe[131], "Champion Wrestler of England (Catch-as-catch-can)" Tom McInerney[132] and the "Champion of West of England" William Hazell in 1907[133] and 1908[134]. Occasionally more evocative language would be used, such as the moniker "Russian Lion" applied to Hackenschmidt. His celebrity, in turn, inspired variations on the 'Hack' name. Referring to his lower weight class rather than age, the German Peter Gotz was occasionally billed in the South West presses as the "Young Hackenschmidt"[135]. Sometimes these monikers reflected the wrestler's country of origin, such as the "Terrible Greek" Antonio Pierri who appeared alongside Arabian Champions Hassan Murad and Achmad Codjali at the Empire Theatre, Bristol in July 1903. As it was apparently their "First Engagement in England" Murad and Codjali themselves were introduced to Bristol audiences in somewhat declamatory terms as "A Challenge to the World!" through

[131] "Gilbert's Circus – Victoria Hall, Exeter", *Western Times*, October 31st, 1904, pg. 1.
[132] "Empire and Hippodrome", *Bristol Magpie*, January 26th, 1905, pg. 14.
[133] "Amusements and Exhibitions – Palace Theatre", *Western Daily Press*, November 27th, 1907, pg. 4.
[134] "Amusements – Palace Theatre – Challenge Accepted!", *Western Daily Press*, December 9th, 1908, pg. 4.
[135] *Western Daily Press,* August 4th, 1906.

local publicity channels, setting out their stall for the challenge matches that would follow (a cool "£10 to any Wrestler in England whom they fail to defeat in 15 minutes"[136].)

These world-renowned competitors were first and foremost professionals. By and large, they were framed as such in the advertising of their engagements at variety houses, or on occasion at local circuses. However, the typically expressive tone of the publicity surrounding the wrestlers during their heyday took their serious sporting practices into the realm of the spectacular. They were simultaneously framed as sportsmen who competed for (and offered out) money and prestige, yet were also promoted as meticulously-trained, extra-ordinary bodies to be beheld, to be seen-to-be-believed. This tone of advertising was, I argue, an aspect of the same scopic market that underpinned Sandow's success. By configuring these impressive champions within a come-and-see mode of engagement, the publicity was designed to appeal to the ideological leanings of middle-class audiences, invoking the sustenance of the British Empire or - as with other male-predominating sport – establishing the link between the built male body and upward social mobility. Additionally, this deliberate personification would become especially pronounced in the challenge matches that operated on a principle of civic pride, amplified by the unambiguous definition of a side for local punters to root for. This raised the stakes for both the professional himself on the one hand and the imagined strength and power of the local manhood on the other. As I will come onto in the next section, I think that the intertext of the 'David vs Goliath' story to these challenge matches takes on further significance under the ideological sign of empire, where the narrative

[136] "Empire and Hippodrome", *Bristol Magpie,* July 18th, 1903, pg.17.

of the plucky underdog taking on an unfamiliar, foreign champion had the potential to arouse imperialist sensibilities (even if the underdog seldom won.)

[RETRACTED DUE TO PERMISSION ISSUES]

- Fig 3.3 – Illustration of series of wrestling exhibitions that took place at The Hurlingham Club, London in June 1904.[137]

Secondly, the spatial configuration of the matches – and thus the proximity of competitors to audience - was subject to adaptation from the traditional 'ring' set-up characteristic of Cornish and Devonshire wrestling to the relatively typical end-on orientation

[137] "The Wrestling Craze: Contests at Hurlingham, June 18", *Illustrated London News*, June 25th, 1904, pg. 949.

of the variety stage. As a sport that required no extraneous equipment beyond the competitors' bodies (with the exception of a safety mat) it was a spatially flexible performance mode, meaning that any wrestling bout or demonstration could easily adapt to a range of environmental and architectural conditions. Visual depictions of wrestling matches in progress were not especially common at the time. Armstrong's book from 1890, for example, contained posed diagrams of the various holds and techniques but not of the bodies-in-motion during the matches themselves. However, an artistic rendering of a wrestling event at Hurlingham gives some indication of the sparseness of the playing field that the competitors would work in, and implies an adaptability of the sport to a range of outdoor or indoor environments [see Fig 3.3] The matter of the exact spatial constraints in which a bout could operate may similarly have been part of the prior terms in which the match was agreed upon – i.e. in which style, for how long, for what prize, and so on – exemplifying the essentially bespoke, non-formalised nature of the sport. Particularly if a challenge match was taking place as part of a variety evening, it makes sense that the wrestling would have needed to accommodate itself amongst the more scenographically elaborate acts such as trapeze artists or the occasional animal show.

A probable exception to the end-on rule is where wrestling took place as part of circus performances. As the name suggests, these took on an arena configuration. In October 1904, the veteran British wrestler Tom Cannon brought a troupe of "International Wrestlers" to the Victoria Hall, Exeter as part of Gilbert's Circus, engaged for five weeks following a run in its hometown of Norwich and a transfer to London[138]. The Victoria Hall was a general-purpose venue in the city centre with a capacity for 2,000 people, hosting a wide variety of events and

[138]"Wrestling Tournament at Norwich", *Norwich Mercury*, February 6th 1904, pg. 5.

spectacles including military drills and myrioramas until its destruction by a fire in 1919[139]. Given that Cannon's troupe were billed alongside performing seals and sea lions during the final week in which they were engaged[140] the proximity of spectators to performance may well have been larger than what might have been the case in a packed variety hall given the increased safety risks. In a sense, then, the circus setting had a practical obligation as well as a resonance with the sport's traditional configuration of space.

In addition, the circus context may well have produced a similar set of meanings to the bodybuilding spectacles practised by Sandow. The appeal of the circus, arguably more so than the variety theatre, operated within the unpredictable and the novel that engaged a 'stare' (in Garland-Thomson's definition) to initiate a process of establishing coherence through the disarray of meaning. If the scopic contract of circus was guided by the panoptic shape of its arena setting then the wrestling spectacles offered by Gilbert's Circus would have minimized the references to its roots as an amateur sport, moving instead towards a construct of exhibition where freakish and sensational elements were prioritised over familiar traditions (and would have been sure to draw the ire of Longhurst and other wrestling purists.)

The third feature of the wrestling's transition from field to South West popular stage was the modification of costume. In adherence to the needs of the sport, costume retained a functional purpose, and thus stayed relatively consistent to those on show at the variety theatres. Wrestling singlets were designed in such a way so neither competitor could gain an advantage by grabbing on to superfluous material to attempt a fall or throw, a rule particularly pronounced in the more universal 'catch-as-catch-can style' (Armstrong, 1890:

[139] "Poole's Myriorama at Exeter", *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette,* February 5th, 1903, pg. 6.
[140] "Gilbert's Circus – Victoria Hall, Exeter", *Western Times*, October 31st, 1904, pg. 1.

34.) The traditional dress in Cornish wrestling is the crucial exception here with its use of a specialised jacket, which Michael Tripp has described as "made of a strong, coarse, canvas material, resembling sailcloth, with loose sleeves, short of the wrists, and tied firmly but loosely at the front by tough loops made of string" (Tripp, 2013 : 3.) However, as suggested by Carkeek in an interview in the *Cornishman* in 1904[141], international wrestlers such as Hackenschmidt had no familiarity with region-specific styles such as Cornish wrestling. As a result, agreement outside the more universally recognised catch styles was unlikely in the variety halls and therefore the signature Cornish jacket perhaps would not have made it onto the stages of popular entertainment during this initial 'craze'.

As the illustrated material borne out of the 'wrestling craze' suggests, the clothing worn by the wrestlers was closer to the neutral, functional attire of amateur athletes than to the tiger-skins and fig-leaves favoured by showmen such as Sandow. In contrast to the nude or nearly-nude presentations of body-builders, collectible cigarette cards such as those released by Ogden's Tobacco Company in the first decade of the twentieth century would depict pugilists and wrestlers from the chest up wearing relaxed and non-descript vests, a representation of healthy male physique deployed somewhat ironically to encourage men to buy cigarettes (McQuistan and Squier, 2001: 103.) On the other hand, as we have seen in the case of Hackenschmidt, there are examples where the stripped wrestling body drew on the focalizing constructs of Edwardian visual culture in order to invite anatomical wonder. During his residency in Bristol during the summer of 1906, Peter Gotz visited the studios of local photographers F and G Bustin to create a publicity portrait that would circulate

[141]"Wrestle or 'Wrastle?' – How the Game is Played in the West of England", *Cornishman,* February 25th, 1904, pg. 2.

internationally, including to the Bain News Service in America [see Fig 3.4] Despite the practical considerations outlined above, from the point of view of 'masculine spectacle' the costume appropriate to any local style would nevertheless have drawn attention to the muscular contours of the performers. This is especially prominent in the intimate and exposing constructs of the variety hall that placed a premium on the spectacular, facilitating a multifarious economy of looking that was brought into particular focus in a darkened auditorium.

[RETRACTED DUE TO PERMISSION ISSUES]

- Fig 3.4 - "Young Hackenschmidt" Peter Gotz posing for a publicity portrait, signed by photographers F and G Bustin based on Cheltenham Road, Bristol, c.1910.[142]

[142] "Peter Gotz – Lightweight wrestler of the World", Library of Congress, LC/B2/2475/2.

[RETRACTED DUE TO PERMISSION ISSUES]

- Fig 3.5. – Peter Gotz and Indian wrestler Kahouta in a posed demonstration of a hold, providing some indication of the attire of the variety wrestlers.[143]

In a context of concern about population health and commercial sport's increased favouring of spectacle over the moral principles of amateurism (Vamplew, 1988: 6) this foregrounding of peak male physique at least had some measure of resonance with the world outside the variety stage. However, there are suggestions that this primarily functional

[143] "Who Will Take the Mat with Hackenschmidt?", *The Sketch,* November 6th 1907, pg. 103.

costume was modified as part of a theatrical flourish in the London music halls. A notorious and supposedly unplanned incident during one of Carkeek's original challenge match evenings at the Alhambra Theatre in March 1902 saw Hackenschmidt – newly arrived in Britain - 'invade' the stage to challenge Carkeek. The reporter in the *Evening Telegraph* described

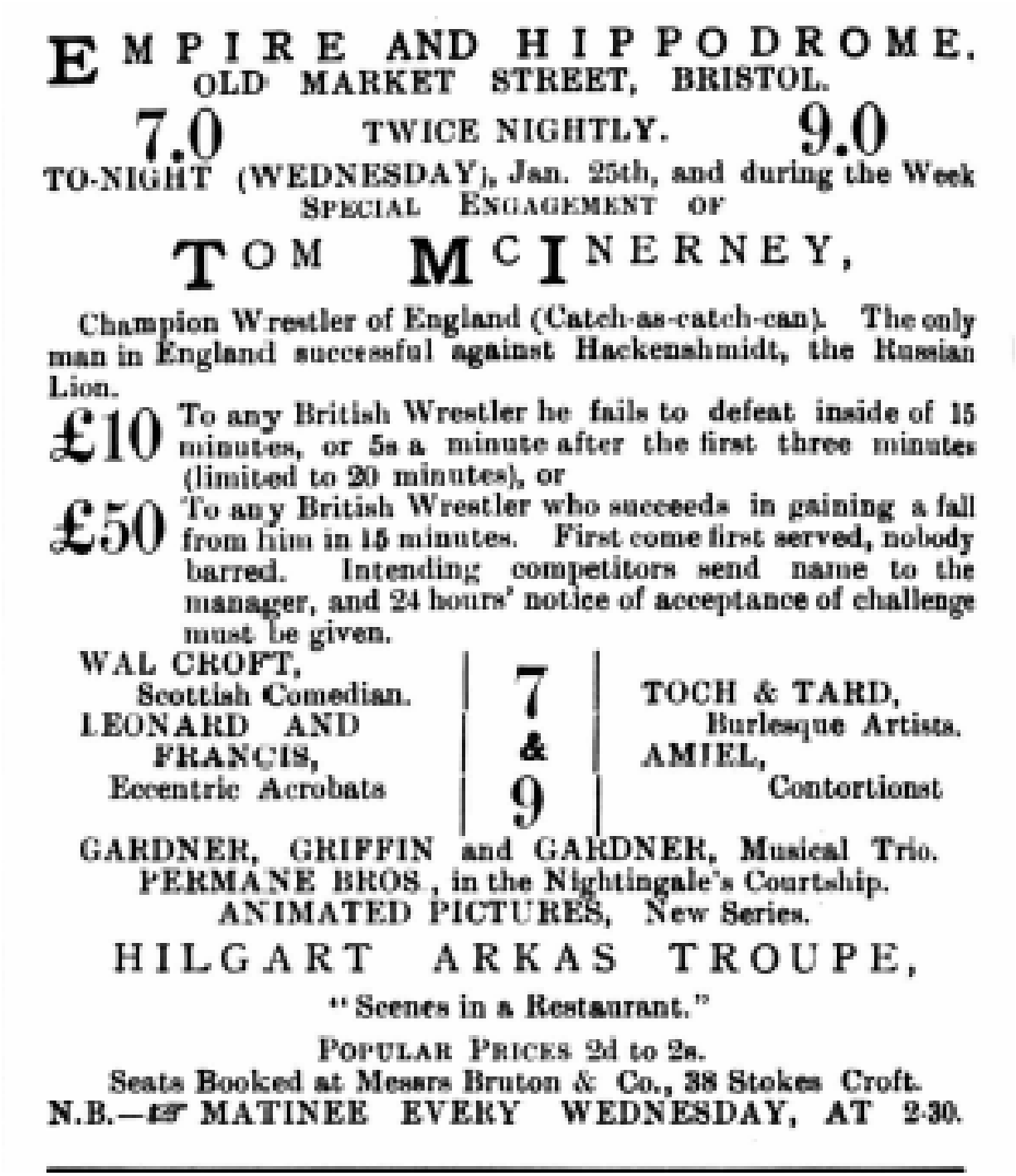
> a tall fair-haired giant, stripped to the waist, the muscles standing out in great rolls on his chest and arms, and so admirably proportioned that his immensity could only be realised when he stood beside a commissionaire, he made an instant sensation.[144]

Whether this was *actually* unrehearsed appears unclear given the tendency for London promoters to engage in publicity stunts (Litherland, 2015: 109.) At the very least, however, the incident with Carkeek demonstrated the theatrical possibilities of the wrestling spectacle, with the impressive and intimidating physique of Hackenschmidt acting as the core signifier of this little interlude: his powerful intervening presence was such that he was only required to stand there, without having to say a word[145].

Significantly, the costuming of the wrestlers stopped short of the Sandow-esque, Olympian bodybuilding trunks made prominent in the 'classical pose' tableaux, or later on in the Sandow Prize competitions. However, these costumes might well have invited unspoken sexual desire regardless, with the singlets worn tight to the body and so doing little to disguise the performers' muscularity or 'what lay beneath'. Unlike Sandow's classical selections, the

[144] "Unrehearsed Scene – Exciting Incident at the Alhambra", *Evening Telegraph*, March 4th, 1902, pg. 3.
[145] Ibid.

wrestler's body was engaged in a physically intensive and tactile spectacle involving sustained movement and exertion of the body. The fashioning of the wrestling bodies and their advanced levels of exposure, therefore, could be read as another example of the blending between sport and commercial spectacle, inviting suggestive readings of the male body and pushing – though not fully breaching - accepted norms of modesty. Like Sandow, wrestlers consciously saw commercial potential in their muscularity and took advantage of the burgeoning industry for photographic studios, hence Hackenschmidt's affiliation with the pharmaceutical industry and Gotz's highly stylised presentation of his body to commemorate his claiming of a championship belt [see Fig 3.4.] In this scopic economy, costumes worn for challenge matches had a treble effect when wrestling was displayed on South West stages: to ensure fair play, to observe local tradition where appropriate, and to contour the fit male body and capture a gaze.



EMPIRE AND HIPPODROME.
OLD MARKET STREET, BRISTOL.
7.0 TWICE NIGHTLY. 9.0
TO-NIGHT (WEDNESDAY), Jan. 25th, and during the Week
SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT OF
TOM McINERNEY,
Champion Wrestler of England (Catch-as-catch-can). The only man in England successful against Hackenschmidt, the Russian Lion.
£10 To any British Wrestler he fails to defeat inside of 15 minutes, or 5s a minute after the first three minutes (limited to 20 minutes), or
£50 To any British Wrestler who succeeds in gaining a fall from him in 15 minutes. First come first served, nobody barred. Intending competitors send name to the manager, and 24 hours' notice of acceptance of challenge must be given.
WAL CROFT, Scottish Comedian.
LEONARD AND FRANCIS, Eccentric Acrobats
7 & 9
TOCH & TARD, Burlesque Artists.
AMIEL, Contortionist
GARDNER, GRIFFIN and GARDNER, Musical Trio.
FERMANE BROS., in the Nightingale's Courtship.
ANIMATED PICTURES, New Series.
HILGART ARKAS TROUPE,
"Scenes in a Restaurant."
POPULAR PRICES 2d to 2s.
Seats Booked at Messrs Bruton & Co., 38 Stokes Croft.
N.B.—☞ MATINEE EVERY WEDNESDAY, AT 2.30.

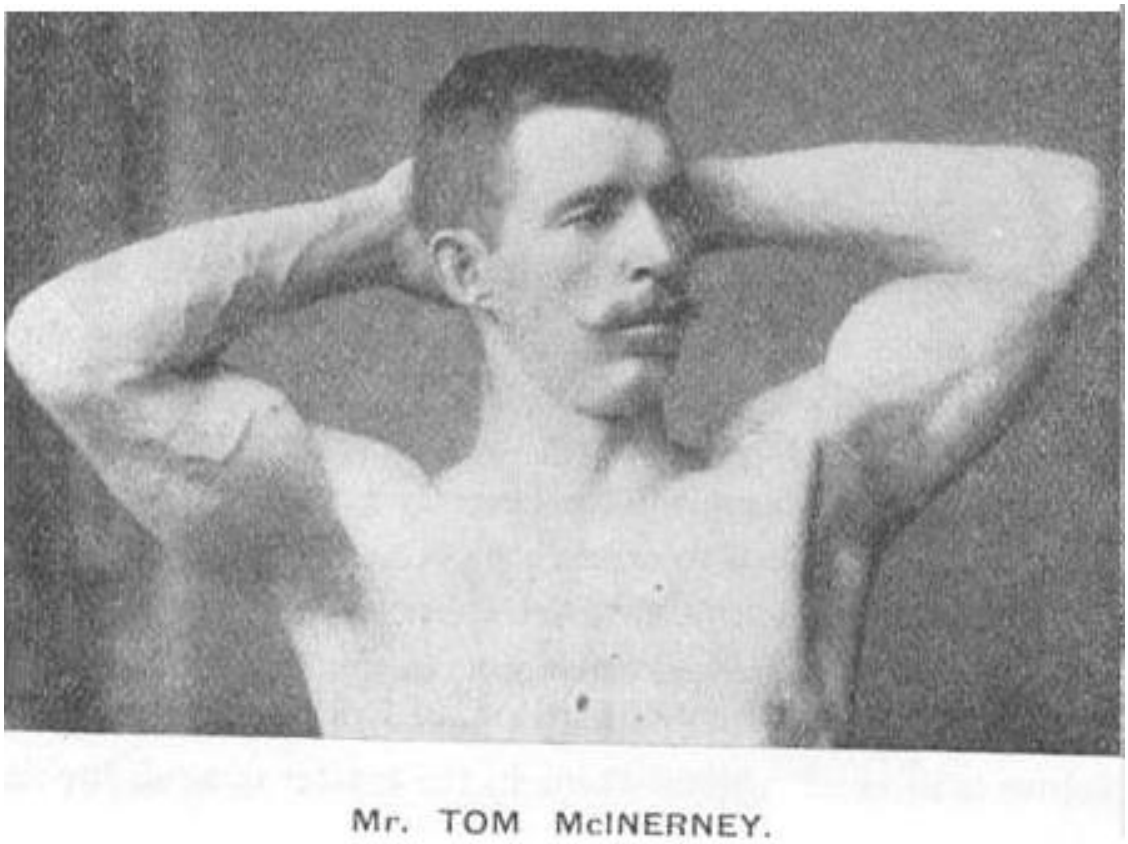
- Fig 3.6 - Challenge issued by Tom McInerney in the humour magazine *Bristol Magpie* in January 1905, two days before his fight with Bristol rugby player Fred Luffman.[146]

[146] "Empire and Hippodrome", *Bristol Magpie*, January 26th, 1905, pg. 14. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

"Good Old Knowle" – Wrestling and the Local Knowingness

On January 26th 1905, the conservative weekly periodical *Bristol Magpie* – self-styled as the "Punch" of Bristol in reference to the prominent London humour and satire magazine – published an advertisement for the "Special Engagement" of English catch-wrestling champion Tom McInerney at the Empire Theatre [see Fig 3.6.] Significantly, the advertisement not only promoted the whole bill that McInerney would be headlining during the week, but also invited the challenges of local "British Wrestlers" to take him on in a twenty-minute bout, with a tantalizing £50 prize (just under £5,000 today) for any man that successfully gained a fall from him within the first fifteen minutes. As theatre scholar Marvin Carlson has argued, this "institutional organisation of publicity" for the challenge matches (Carlson, 1989: 91-92) affected the reading formations of potential audiences, which were in this case primarily derived from the local populace. McInerney is described evocatively as a champion and conqueror of Hackenschmidt, with the copy displayed alongside a direct invitation to local fighters and priming the audience for a specific way of 'reading' and associating with the performance. The advertisement plays on an audience's prior knowledge of comparable narratives in which the unfancied underdog puts up an admirable fight against the stronger champion. Despite the fact that McInerney seemed to have been treated cordially by his hosts at the Empire Theatre, the significance of religion to the cultural life of the city suggests that middle-class target audiences were familiar with biblical intertexts, with the David and Goliath story characterised by an unfavourable depiction of an invasive - though nevertheless physically impressive - Other. These sensationalist dynamics organising the publicity not only promised a thrilling narrative for audiences to follow, but also an opportunity for her or him

to project their local connections and pride onto the challenge matches, confirming a sense of collective identity against an unfamiliar outsider.



- Fig 3.7 – 'Champion Wrestler of England' Tom McInerney, from J.W. McWhinnie's pamphlet *Modern Wrestling* (published 1902.)

On January 28th 1905, the well-known Bristol rugby player Fred Luffman stepped up to take the English champion on. According to coverage of past achievements in the local presses, Luffman typified the all-round ideal of the amateur sportsman. A tailor by trade who lived and worked in the southern Bristol neighbourhoods of Knowle, Totterdown and Brislington for most of his adult life ('Frederick Luffman', 1891) he was amongst the first players for Bristol Rugby Club at its establishment in 1888[147] [see Fig 3.8.] He also played for

[147] "Football in Bristol – Season 1891-2", *Bristol Mercury,* September 2nd, 1891, pg. 3.

the Knowle 2nds cricket team[148] before apparently securing a job as a groundsman and coach for a cricket club in Manhattan, New York[149]. Between 1905 and 1908 when he was in his late thirties and early forties Luffman made numerous appearances on the local variety stages in wrestling matches, and this apparently includes a challenge against Hackenschmidt and other international champions such as Gotz[150]. In addition, in 1908 he took on the famous Jack Johnson in a boxing match, where his initial "Successful and Surprising Display" in the ring earned him a second opportunity to face the Galveston Giant the following evening, on both occasions in front of crowded Bristol houses[151]. Luffman on the one hand embodied the values of late Victorian amateurism – fair play, all-round ability and an emphasis on participation over financial gain. On the other, his contribution to an evening of variety entertainment framed the serious business of wrestling as part of a commercial enterprise, with theatre managers and promoters placing a premium on the spectacular and (supposedly) unpredictable. Luffman also gave Bristol audiences a side to root for when celebrity sportsmen such as Hackenschmidt, McInerney and others visited the city, adding to the excitement and drama of a quintessentially *local* sporting spectacle.

[148] "Notes on Sport – Cricket", *Western Daily Press,* July 23rd, 1906, pg. 9.
[149] Untitled column, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle,* April 28th, 1896, pg. 11.
[150] "Amusements and Exhibitions – Empire & Hippodrome", *Western Daily Press,* August 4th 1906, pg. 4.
[151] "Empire & Hippodrome", *Western Daily Press,* September 3rd 1908, pg. 4.

- Fig 3.8 – Bristol rugby player Fred Luffman in his early twenties, part of the First XV for the Bristol Rugby Club for the 1888-89 season.[152]

[152] Photograph of the Bristol Rugby Club First XV Season 1888-89 season, Bristol Archives, 41582/Ph/1.

The materially flexible yet structurally rule-bound conditions of variety challenge matches situated them as a showcase of international sporting excellence with the additional invitation for the local community to test themselves against established champions. This participatory quality to the challenge match necessarily implicated the audience in a specific signifying code that enhanced a performer-audience relationship so distinctive of popular performance at the time. Not only were there open calls for challengers to be plucked from the general public (the advertising of the McInerney engagement at the Empire Theatre in January 1906 specifically stipulated that nobody was barred [see Fig 3.6]) but during the actual fight or 'performance' itself the audience were framed as active collaborators in the theatrical process: they might even be seen the vital element to the act's success.

To tie together the exploration in the previous section of the transition of sport onto the stage, I would therefore like to focus on the most crucial factor of the performance exchange: the audience. Popular performance had become part of a new middle-class working pattern. City-centre halls like the Empire operated on a twice-nightly basis at 7pm and 9pm, indicating some attempt to cater for those working in city-centre businesses or establishments. In turn, the Empire regularly included Wednesday matinees [see Fig 3.6] As a result, theatre management paid close attention to the tastes of their paying audiences, a strategy usefully termed by Andrew Horrall as 'up-to-dateness' (Horrall, 2001: 3.) In variety entertainment that emerged from its closely-related form of the music-hall, itself a prominent feature of working-class leisure (Faulk, 2000: 171) audience participation was at the heart of the most popular and marketable acts, with the dynamism of certain performers and the suggestive nature of their turns inviting the audience to 'read between the lines' and thus actively contribute to the meanings produced in the performance moment. This positioning of audience in relation to

such material, especially as they often made use of local references and affairs, offered a temporary formulation of civic identity that included a suspension of the ideologies that tended to organise working lives. This theatrical device, described by Victorian performance scholar Peter Bailey as a "discourse *and* practice" in its capacity as both an organisational mode and as a presentational style, has been productively described as "knowingness". Bailey defines the concept

> as a popular discourse [that] works to destabilise the various official knowledges that sought to order common life through their languages of improvement and respectability and the intensifying grid of regulative social disciplines that marked the period. […] Knowingness […] is not a direct refutation of these languages, to which it remains inescapably subordinate in the larger systems of society; it is rather a countervailing dialogue that sets experience against prescription, and lays claim to an independent competence in the business and enjoyment of living.
>
> (Bailey, 1998: 139-140)

Essential to the convention of 'knowingness' is the idea of a prevailing discourse or social 'knowledge' that certain cultural interventions – such as variety theatre – could suspend and reconfigure to reflect every-day interests. In the context of the significant commercial success of this performer-audience contract, in this section I would like to investigate how this same mode of organisation could be used to assist an analysis of the McInerney-Luffman match.

This is a productive approach in a targeted geographical context as these matches' core selling points were the direct implication of the local manhood and its theatricalised (self-) display.

The comparison between Bailey's concept of knowingness and the ideologically-charged frameworks of competitive sport is not exact. Bailey's case study of the comic music-hall song, its heavily presentational style in performance and focus on audience participation exemplified how lived urban experience created a 'metalanguage' that "was not the conceptually articulated and literate knowledge of the professional or specialist, but the refinement of strongly oral and pragmatic everyday consciousness". This language, Bailey argues, carried real potency when shared in the congregational context of the music hall. (Bailey, 1998: 149.) This is somewhat different to the knowledges associated with wrestling, as despite its significance to regional tradition the sport was still a largely specialist pursuit and thus the secrets of the various holds and techniques deployed by the fighters would not have been 'known' in quite the same way to general audiences (barring some eagle-eyed experts.) However, I want to suggest that the practices of the music-hall comic song and the variety wrestling challenge match share common structural ground in two ways, especially when embedded within the local milieu. Firstly, the framing of the amateur challenger as a 'local lad' elicits a shared communal knowledge amongst the match's spectators and through interpellation organises them around a common marker of social identity. Secondly, by way of this process of identification, the spectators or fans were invited to 'co-produce' the content of the wrestling spectacle in a largely similar way to the comic music-hall song through their cheering, name-calling and protestation (within reason.) In the remaining paragraphs of this chapter, I will apply these two formal features of the wrestling spectacle primarily to the

McInerney-Luffman match to examine the relationship between commercial popular performance and a community's self-expression of civic pride during a live moment.

Firstly, the way in which the spectators of the variety wrestling match were ideologically positioned in relation to proceedings is significant, especially so when the act directly involved local interest. As theatre scholar Marco de Marinis has outlined in his discussion of the "dramaturgy of the spectator" (1989: 100) audiences are drawn into a theatrical relationship through methods of "refocalization", where the content of the work attracts attention through meticulous and essentially manipulative networks of signs. However, de Marinis also recognises the essentially active role spectators take in decoding those signs, suggesting that analysis

> must see her/his understanding of the performance not as some mechanical operation which has been strictly pre-determined - by the performance and its producers – but rather as a task which the spectator carries out in conditions of relative independence, or, as Franco Ruffini has recently suggested, in conditions of "controlled creative autonomy".
>
> (de Marinis, 1987: 100)

This condition of an essentially mediated autonomy, as de Marinis argues, applies to any relationship between audience and artwork. However, in the case of variety wrestling, sport resists predictability and pre-determination by its very design. This suggests that whilst the responses of spectators to the narrative produced before them remained within those

mediated conditions, there is an additional layer of involvement as the producing agents (the champion, the challenger, and promoters) cannot ultimately guarantee a specific outcome.

That essential unpredictability of the wrestling challenge match had implications for how the spectators were ideologically (and to some extent materially) situated in relation to the 'act', especially when the performance involved – indeed, actively centred – local interest. One of de Marinis' objectives in formulating the concept of the "model spectator" (a modification of Eco's 'model reader') is "to show precisely in what way and to what degree a performance tries to construct/predetermine a certain type of reception both as a part of its internal structure and as it unfolds" (1987: 103.) Carlson extends this condition of predetermination to include what Stanley Fish calls a 'community of readers' "which shares common values and determines collectively the norms and conventions according to which individual readings take place" (Carlson, 1989: 85.) Despite that unknowability of outcome, the prominent conditions of local pride as well as the active and vocal modes of spectatorship in commercial sport organised the Bristol crowd around a signifier of collective identity and thus 'primed' – short of fully securing - a specific emotional response.

To explore this concept, this report of Luffman's challenge to Tom McInerney in the *Western Daily Press* is worth reproducing extensively as it gives some insight into that unique configuration between the performance text and the spectator during the challenge match. It read:

> Last night, at the Empire, there was a crowded audience to witness a challenge match between Tom McInerney, the only man who has successfully withstood the champion Hackenschmidt, and Mr Fred Luffman, a member of the Knowle Rugby Club. Seen before the match,

Mr Luffman stated that he had had his experience in America, and he was pretty confident of winning. Mr McInerney said he was open to take anybody in competition for £50.

[…]

Cheers were raised for Luffman as he escaped McInerney's grip, but after some throwing McInerney secured his opponent and within five minutes had all the pressure upon him […] A partly half nelson helped McInerney to control all the other man's muscles. It was a fine achievement, and at the end of 10 minutes it was apparent that Luffman had no chance. Still cries of "Good Old Knowle" greeted Luffman, as the contestants entered upon the next bout. […] The spectators cheered most enthusiastically, and the gyrations of the competitors were exciting to witness. […] Those who witnessed the contest were evidently satisfied, and cheers were raised for the winner. Mr McInerney acknowledged the compliment and stated that everything in the contest had been conducted on absolutely fair lines, calling Mr Luffman to prove the assertion. Mr Luffman appeared on the stage in an exhausted condition, and admitted that the statement made by McInerney was correct.[153]

[153] "Wrestling Match in Bristol", *Western Daily Press*, January 28th 1905, pg. 6.

I am particularly interested in the reporting of cheers of "Good Old Knowle" from the crowd in support of Luffman's efforts insofar as it performatively shaped the symbolic boundary between local boy and visiting champion. Though the audience in this report stop short of making an "effective, material contribution" to proceedings (de Marinis, 1987: 102) there is some suggestion here of a system of interpellation in the Althusserian sense, where hailing and characterising the respective parties reproduced a prevailing social order (Althusser, 1970: 33.) To explore this further, one of the most productive theoretical frameworks applied to the analysis of sport as a community-affirming exercise is 'social identity theory', defined as "a social psychological theory of identity formation that privileges the role of large group identities in forming individuals' concepts of self" (in Calhoun ed., 2002.) In the sporting context, it is used to establish spectator identification as a predictor of behaviour during a sporting event. Adopting a quantitative sociological method to a present-day examples, the psychologists Daniel Wann and Frederick Grieve highlight how "social identity threat" is key to understanding the investment of spectators during the proceedings, suggesting that "fans of a losing team and fans of a home team would experience threats to their identity and, consequently, exhibit high levels of in-group favouritism" (Wann and Grieve, 2005: 531.) The sports theorist Ian Jones similarly highlights the relationship between competitive sport and its attraction for the individual in fostering a "self-concept" within the mutual collective, writing that

> sport fulfils a number of important functions for the individual. These include benefits for self-esteem, providing an opportunity for escape, the opportunity for group and family interaction, and a sense of drama and entertainment. […] Membership of a sport community thus

> becomes, for some, an important and durable element of the self-concept, and becomes a valued element of the individual's collective identity.
>
> (Jones, 2015: 304)

The interpellative procedures of a variety wrestling challenge match – including the prior publicity, the challenger's self-nomination to accept the challenge, and the intertexts of other underdog narratives – ultimately offered the individual audience member the possibility to attain and experience a sense of belonging, directly (though temporarily) providing a means through which that individual's sense of self could be configured. That sense of belonging, I argue, is orientated around a principle of 'knowingness' in that it is derived from a shared knowledge and perception of the local community, in the same way that a music-hall song drew on easily relatable, and sometimes locally-specific, references.

The above account gives some impression of Luffman's direct association with the 'in-group' (in other words, the Bristol audience) and the implicit framing of McInerney as representative of an 'out-group'. Given references to McInerney as the "Champion of England" in the 1905 Bristol advertisements, it is interesting to note that he actually had roots in County Kerry, Ireland[154] before settling in Liverpool, with his touring as a variety wrestler primarily concentrated in the North of England[155] following a brief stint in America in the 1890s. This latter trip included a match against Evan "The Strangler" Lewis at the San Francisco Orpheum in 1890 when he was still in his early twenties[156]. During this period

[154] "Shamrock, Thistle and Leek – Ireland, At Home and Abroad", *Reynolds Newspaper,* February 2nd, 1896, pg. 3.
[155] "Amusements – Palace Theatre, Anlaby Rd, Hull", *Hull Daily Mail,* March 4th, 1904, pg. 2.
[156] "Orpheum", *San Francisco Chronicle,* August 3rd, 1890, pg. 3.

abroad, he underlined his status as a 'professional body', performing with Parson Davies' Athletic Troupe and apparently posing for life-drawing classes [157]. Perhaps another complicated factor is that McInerney was not strictly speaking a 'professional' sportsman in 1905, despite surely being well-reimbursed for his nationwide touring. He is listed in both the 1901 and 1911 censuses as a 'Licensed Victualler' – the latter at Feathers' Hotel in Liverpool - suggesting perhaps that his income was supplemented by his wrestling exploits rather than acting as its primary source ("Tom McInerney", 1901, "Tom McInerney", 1911.) However, even if he was treated respectfully by the Bristol crowd, the foregrounding of his previous successes and the framing of the wrestling within the context of a variety evening nevertheless implicated McInerney as the 'outsider' within the narrative. Conversely, Luffman was recognised as a 'well-known' rugby footballer in local newspaper coverage and thus had a certain reputation amongst those 'in the know'. These intra-community references allowed the invested spectator to associate the achievements of the Bristol man with his or her own sense of local pride. As Luffman's resident neighbourhood, the hail of 'Knowle' shouted from the crowd is therefore a consequence of how the sporting act both framed and relied upon the spectator's self-recognition as part of the in-group. The substitution of a personal name with a geographical marker may be read as a speech act that performatively produced the conditions of the competitive exchange between the locals and their guest, affirming a common civic identity.

This formulation of community spirit and the fostering of a collective identity, as is the case in most competitive commercial sport, was temporary and ephemeral. In this construct, civic pride is a temporary phenomenon made especially pronounced during the sporting

[157] Untitled column, *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, February 14th 1892, pg. 6.

event, briefly assembling an otherwise disparate group of people around a shared notion of social identity. However, this mode of identification is premised on an essential negation. The defining features of one group are produced in direct contradistinction to those of the opposing 'out-group', a relation that can be summed up as 'we are us on the basis that we are not you'. This bears a striking resemblance to Émile Durkheim's influential concept of "mechanical solidarity" (Lukes, 1978: 158) insofar as identification during the sporting ritual is based on a mutual 'resemblance' – in this case, an organising concept of territory and geographical location. In this sense, the live and unpredictable activity of the challenge match, particularly within the high-stakes narrative framework of the local amateur facing a champion, facilitates a potent though ultimately fleeting mode of collective identification. This process is shaped by a set of specific local knowledges that 'mark' against those perceived as outside that identifying framework.

Beyond their identification as a temporary collective, the second key role of the spectators during the challenge match was their active contribution to the proceedings. Aside from their calling out of 'Good Old Knowle' as an act of interpellation that hailed themselves and the competitors in turn, in the vein of other commercial sports the spectators were permitted to both vocally contribute yet also ensure the fair lines on which the bout was undertaken. As part of his dual role as headline performer and eventual victor, McInerney directly interacted with the spectators at the close of the bout on this basis, "acknowledging their compliment" of cheering and inviting his opponent to likewise address the local crowd.[158] In concurrence, Luffman's open acknowledgement of fair play (and his fair defeat) settled the matter amicably, implicitly inviting the audience to respond to defeat alongside

[158] "Wrestling Match in Bristol", *Western Daily Press*, January 28th 1905, pg. 6.

him. Luffman's vocal contribution at his opponent's invitation is especially notable given his background as a sporting all-rounder. This performative gesture following the fight confirms the mechanical solidarity between him and the local crowd based on a proper and mutually-felt code of behaviour, even as he (and by extension they) succumbed to defeat.

What is interesting about these challenge matches, then, is that whilst they were situated on bills designed for popular excitement, the standard of fair play appeared to remain prominent. In other words, despite the wrestling match holding out the promise of a thrilling spectacle (and Luffman himself contributes to this build-up, expressing his confidence to the crowd that he could compete and even win based on his experience in America[159]) there was the mutual understanding that the key priority for the fight was that it should adhere to the pre-agreed conditions. As such, the spectators as much as the referee and the competitors themselves had an awareness that the fights should follow clear rules, even if they were occasionally misunderstood by those in the crowd. To express this dynamic through another example, the *Western Times*' report of the engagement of Cannon's wrestling troupe at Victoria Hall, Exeter in 1904 highlighted a crucial role that a partisan crowd could play:

> There were a couple of exciting wrestling bouts at Gilbert's Circus last evening. First, Johnston, the Naval Reserve champion, tried conclusions with Maurice Micklivitich [sic], described as the champion catch-as-catch-can wrestler of the world. The idea was that he should stand off his opponent for five minutes, and that every additional minute should be rewarded by ten shillings. Micklivitch is

[159] Ibid.

> a heavily built man, with big reach, but he could not back the sailor within the five minutes. Indeed, it was two minutes twenty seconds later before the heavier metal told and the referee blew his whistle. The audience, misled from the referee's announcement that both shoulder-blades must be placed flat on the carpet to score a win, contested his award to the champion. The points of Johnston's shoulders were down fairly enough, however, and he appeased the protestors by frankly declaring that he had been fairly beaten. That he should withstand the bigger man so long is to his credit.[160]

In this case, the audience were able to protest against a referee's decision when it did not go the way of the local favourite, going so far as to communicate directly with the defeated man at the close of the fight. Whilst the disagreement in this case was due to a misunderstanding of the prior-agreed rules, the fact that members of the crowd could act as auxiliary referees had some resonance not only with other popular sports at the time (such as football) but also with the variety and music-hall context, in which vocal audience feedback during songs and other acts were typical.

The invitation for the audience to co-produce the wrestling spectacle, either as invested locals or as adjudicators, appears to suggest some common ground between the developments in commercial sport and the participatory elements of music-hall acts. However, this relationship is complicated by the practical requirements of the variety spectacle, calling into question whether these wrestling matches were as unpredictable as

[160] "Exeter Wrestling", *Western Times*, November 4th 1904, pg. 12.

other sports might have been. It would be easy to place too much emphasis on the factor of fair play as the exact intentions of McInerney regarding the conduct of the fight is essentially a matter of conjecture, especially when he had a contractual agreement to honour as part of the evening's entertainment. Is it true, as Mike Tripp suggests in his short biographical entry on Hackenschmidt, that the headlining professionals would 'go easy' on their challengers as a way of extending the act and filling the twenty-minute slot (Tripp, 2004)? In turn, could Luffman's expression of confidence in winning the bout beforehand be read as another kind of 'knowingness', where both he and the audience meta-communicated to each other that there was no realistic expectation that he would win the £50 prize?

It is perhaps a telling condition of the variety wrestling match in the first decade of the twentieth century that there are no references to occasions in which the challenger actually defeated the headliner. There are none from the South West that I have found, aside from the earlier Mr Fisher withstanding – though still failing to defeat McInerney for a prescribed amount of time and claiming a small prize. What this suggests is that the permitted contribution of the spectators was one based on hope rather than expectation and that their responses to the wrestling spectacle were primed by that unspoken knowledge of likely defeat. The prospect of the local boy defeating or even just withstanding the renowned visitor for twenty minutes must have been a compelling one, even if it was only Luffman who would have financially benefitted from the achievement. The challenge match, in this sense, is therefore given its unique meaning through a temporary act of homogenization, where the efforts of the challenger's body in the wrestling bout are directly linked to the shared identity and values of the local spectators. Even if all parties involved 'knew', in Bailey's sense of theatrical meta-understanding, that victory was fanciful, I would argue that the unique effect

of the variety sporting spectacle was by the 'selling' of that prospective though essentially unattainable outcome: maybe, just maybe, in this theatre in this city, the underdog would triumph. In other words, through the theatrical device of knowingness, the structural qualities of the challenge match depended *integrally* on the spectators' active involvement, in that their responses were led by the locally derived values and experiences that they brought into the hall.

If we accept the principle that managers of the main variety theatres in Bristol – namely Livermore's People's Palace and the Empire Theatre - were responsive to popular tastes, it opens up a question that requires further inquiry: that is, whether there was a causal relationship between the rapid evolution of commercial sport in the region (and of course the country at large) and the integration of sporting events into the variety entertainment halls. On balance of the evidence on South West variety wrestling, the variety hall appears to have been a natural host for competitive and commercial sport. The growing popularity of spectator sport that cut across class lines presented theatre management not so much with a dilemma as an enticing business opportunity, where the (allegedly) unpredictable and unscripted thrills offered by sport could be incorporated into a purpose-built theatre building. This notion of thrill and the stakes one might have in the match were made all the more prevalent when it involved local interest and where the proceedings of the match put collective social identity – and by extension a secure *individual* identity – up for scrutiny. In the aftermath of the Boer War and the schisms this laid bare in British society, the social need for collective identification lurked in the background of the challenge matches. They provided a mode in which local pride and familiarity could be tested against the invasive, powerful figure of an imaginary Other. In McInerney's case, the distinction was intra-national on

account of his Irish origins and his base in Liverpool; but in other versions of the challenge matches such as those with Hacknesnschmidt or the Middle Eastern fighters, the wrestlers stood in as larger symbols for global cultures outside of Britain.

Further to this, the sporting spectacle allowed for the active investment and even vocal contribution of its spectators. Perhaps this participatory principle is the *integral part* of the sporting spectacle to be characterised as such. One explanation for sport's transition to the variety stage is that spectator involvement was its key draw, particularly when compared with other theatrical dynamics offered to pleasure-seekers in the Edwardian cities (Horrall, 2001: 1-5.) As a comparison, the other live entertainment options in Bristol during the final week of January 1905 included the final performances of Theatre Royal's pantomime *Robinson Crusoe,* a concert of 'Sousa and His Band' at the Victoria Rooms, and the well-known "coster comedian" Alec Hurley headlining at the People's Palace (another 'knowing' social critique, this time of the lived experiences of working class labour.[161]) Instead of the passive, hermetic mode of spectatorship implicit to the 'higher' forms of naturalism or Shakespeare at the conventional theatres, the promise of dialogue offered by the music hall and variety entertainment allowed willing customers to have their say on proceedings and even, if they so desired, have direct communication with the on-stage participants. In much the same way as the gallery boys and girls in Bailey's case study of the Victorian music-hall (Bailey, 1989: 147) the sporting event when figured on a variety bill allowed for spectators to suspend prescriptive social knowledges and unite themselves around a shared counter-discourse, defying the one-way narrative dynamic typical of the period's legitimate drama.

[161] "Amusements - Empire", *Western Daily Press,* January 25th, 1905, pg. 4.

This chapter has established the capacity for popular entertainment to direct public opinion, particularly at the local level. By establishing the South West's well-held tradition of wrestling and its adaptation from the sporting field to the spectacular context of the variety hall, the chapter has explored how the unique spectacle of the challenge match during the nationwide 'wrestling craze' gives some insight into how civic pride could be constructed through 'knowing' modes of performance, with the toils of the local sportsman standing in as a symbol for the prosperity of the local community. The next chapter extends this principle of community-building but departs from the first three chapters in two notable ways. Firstly, the dichotomy between on-stage representations and off-stage social practices is, I argue, a crucial element to the analysis of performed masculinities around the turn of the twentieth century. Even a figure as imposing as Hackenschmidt had an off-stage persona at odds with his theatrical self-presentation. During another of his visits to Bristol in September 1907, a local correspondent printed a somewhat tender interview with Hackenschmidt about his love for angling and his fondness for nearby Keynsham and Clevedon as prime fishing spots. He wrote that "it seems almost impossible to imagine him sitting on a riverbank and baiting a number eleven hook" given the wrestler's "Herculean" build[162]. In Chapter Four, I adopt a biographical approach to Bath-born popular entertainer Carl Fredricks whose labours on and off stage also constructed his social identity in particular ways. In order to present a fuller picture of live cultural productions of masculinity in the South West during the period, the multifarious ways in which men built their identities in their *off-stage* lives – for example,

[162] George Hackenschmidt's Scrapbook 1901-1911, George Hackenschmidt Collection, The H.J Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture & Sports, The University of Texas at Austin, online resource.

through their emotional attachments or their acquisition of resources - warrants further exploration.

Secondly, whilst the focus so far has been on fit, athletic male bodies displayed through public spectacle, the next two chapters draw on case studies where the exhibited bodies were not expressly the fruits of intensive physical development. Whilst he was neither ill nor especially fat (though I suppose, as the visual evidence used in the next chapter will demonstrate, this is a matter of opinion) Fredricks concealed his body primarily under costume. This fashioning took the form of refined dinner jackets, costumes with military references typically worn by all-male concert parties, or sometimes overt cultural cross-dressing that tended to be replete with Oriental features. In the early part of his career, there is also evidence of the use of blackface makeup typical of the period's minstrelsy practices. What this suggests is that in the live performance moment 'masculine spectacle' was not simply a matter of muscle but also of manners, with men of a range of physical deportments able to build consensus around respectability through their representational practice in much the same way as the amateur sportsmen, physical culturists and variety wrestlers did.

FOUR

Moving Between: The On and Off-stage Masculinities of Carlton Fredricks

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- Fig 4.1 - A young Carlton Fredricks as a ventriloquist, taken from a family album, date unknown.[163]

*

This chapter takes a biographical approach to the on- and off-stage activities of the Bath-born entertainer Charles Frederick Pinkett (1867-1926.) His dedication to his craft is perhaps best exemplified by the legal change of his birth name to his professional moniker

[163] Fredricks family photo album, c.1890-1900, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/5/1.

'Carlton Fredricks' in 1921 ("Carlton Fredricks", 1921.) With close reference to his archive, I provide an unusual perspective on the realities of touring life in the *fin-de-siècle* popular entertainment industries in the South West and across Britain. Specifically, these practices show how constructions of middle-class masculinity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were on the one hand projected in the live performance moment and on the other established through personal connections and professional networks. On stage, Fredricks shifted between many different representations of masculinity over the course of his career, from the *commedia* influenced trappings of Pierrot performances to the refined styles of his concert parties. The early conventions of the latter included an all-male cast and military references that were threaded through the repertoire, costuming and company name (see Ince, 2015.) For instance, Fredricks' Royal Olympian Entertainers based at Teignmouth in the summer of 1905 adopted maritime-influenced costumes [see Fig. 4.2] and built a temporary pavilion on the site of the town's Old Artillery Battery[164]. There is also visual evidence from later in his career to suggest his involvement in cultural cross-dressing including blackface minstrelsy and orientalist performance, demonstrated by the 'Ya Pynkito' act that was billed as part of his mixed-gender 'Les Vivandieres' concert party[165]. These switches between characterisations whilst engaging in extensive tours across the country suggest a continuous process of adaptation between communities and architectural scales, and this is significant in a context where responses to overtly patriotic material were not uniformly positive. As the chapter explores, the Poole's entertainments were dispersed across a range of locations in the British Isles from the urban centres of Dublin and Edinburgh to the smaller

[164] Untitled column, *The Era,* July 1st 1905, pg. 21.
[165] *The Era,* March 26th, 1910; "From the Provinces – Barry Island", *Music Hall and Theatre Review,* August 11th, 1910, pg. 509.

mining towns of Abergavenny in Wales or Hetton-le-Hole on Tyneside. The ways in which different geographies of performance could produce a range of responses and even help to shape on-stage repertoires are a key inquiry of this chapter.

This persistent moving-between also had a direct impact on Fredricks' off-stage social practices. Balancing his private family life with a theatrical career in which he was self-represented for virtually its whole duration, Fredericks' success was primarily down to a hands-on understanding of the core business practices and infrastructures of British entertainment, as well as the benefit of a network of contacts through which to secure accommodation and near-continuous work. As such, he took on numerous off-stage responsibilities including stage management, talent development and casting, and in 1898 he had lesseeship of the Lyric Theatre in Bath.[166] However, though he had key contact addresses in his home city[167], his sustained period of touring around 1900 represented a challenge to the conventional, middle-class constructs of husband and father. During the period covered here (1867 to 1904) the respectable ideal of the 'family man' was persistently seen to sit within a settled domestic framework both in the literal architectural sense – i.e. at a permanent address - and as an emotion-led "state of mind" (Tosh, 1999: 4.) The evidence shows that Fredricks' experience as a travelling theatre worker – either as part of a company or through independent means – involved some compromise in elements of his personal life. Key decisions such as having children and securing of lodgings for a family of four (and eventually a family of seven) had implications for the maintenance of an outward display of masculine identity.

[166] Photograph of the interior of the Lyric theatre, Bath, taken whilst Carlton Fredricks was acting manager, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/3/16.

[167] Volume entitled 'Addresses', c. 1907, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/5.

As the chapter will explore, the way in which Fredricks negotiated 'respectability' both on and off stage allows for a more nuanced historical understanding of the way in which class was configured in late Victorian and Edwardian popular entertainment. As we will see in Fredricks' case, class can be analysed as a performed aesthetic quality that could be displayed and reproduced in a range of public-facing contexts. In his literary study *Dandies and Saints: Styles of Victorian Manhood* (1995) James Eli Adams' object of analysis is the

> anxious conjunction of discipline and performance in middle-class Victorian constructions of masculinity [and] the intractable element of theatricality in all masculine self-fashioning, which inevitably makes appeal to an audience, real or imagined.
>
> (Adams, 1995: 10-11)

The evidence suggests that over Fredericks' life-course there was a gradual development of a professionalised self-display that required an accrual of quasi-theatrical properties such as clothing or 'props' through which that identity could be built and expressed. To extend Adams' theatrical metaphor further, this display also required access to particular 'stages' on which to perform that middle-class sensibility such as pier pavilions or on the doorstep of a lodging-house whilst on tour. Examples of this interplay can be found in many of the visual and journalistic sources on Fredricks including the refinery of the Guide's dinner jackets as part of the Poole's Myriorama, the elaborate gifts bestowed on him and his wife following their disengagement from Bristol's Empire Theatre, or the fashionable display on show at the esplanades of Aberystwyth or Lowestoft. Limited information on the precise economic factors of Fredricks' career makes a more conventional class analysis difficult. For example, we have limited evidence of his pay before his employment with Poole's and none during it. What is

more productive in this case, then, is to explore how Fredricks expressed particular signifiers of class that may or may not have reflected the actual material resources accrued or the actual material conditions experienced. Whilst we certainly can make some sense of the lived realities of a professional entertainment career during this period, most notably the improvisational nature of the family's lodgings, class is here considered as a matter of self-presentation – indeed, self-theatricality – and my proposed concept of 'portable domesticity' introduced in the third section of the chapter is in the first instance referring to the outward appearance of a middle-class sensibility.

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- Fig 4.2 - Male company members of Carl Fredricks' Royal Olympian Concert Party, date unknown.[168]

The available archival material on the Fredricks family, including an address book, photographic collections and administrative records offers a unique view of touring entertainments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An analysis that matches this material to journalistic evidence can enhance our understanding of a range of factors in

[168] Photo postcard of the Carl Fredricks Olympian Concert Party, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/3/7.

entertainment during this rapidly changing historical moment. These include the working lives of non-celebrity performers, the infrastructures of popular entertainment outside of London and the transmission of the pro-British message through live cultural practices, especially during the Boer War. Alongside these new lines of inquiry, a targeted life-history of a male entertainer at the turn of the twentieth century offers a way to test the concept of hegemonic masculinity and apply its critiques to a historical analysis. As outlined in the Introduction, Ben Griffin's critique of Raewyn Connell's original model is that it is unclear who practises or embodies the hegemonic ideal at a given moment – where are the men performing hegemonic masculinity, and even if such men did exist, is it ever the case that men continually perform the same identity? This is particularly the case given Connell's admission that such images "need not correspond to the actual characters of the men who hold the most social power" (Connell, 1995: 77.) Griffin writes that

> this idea deserves closer scrutiny because it means that whereas those masculinities identified as complicit, subordinate or marginal are defined by sets of practices performed by identifiable sets of men, hegemonic masculinity is not: it may be a configuration of practice that no one need practise.
>
> (Griffin, 2018: 7)

Griffin's provocation, then, is summed up as "is the history of masculinity to be a history of representations and practices?" (Griffin, 2018: 7.)

This is an interesting point of departure for the following discussion of Fredricks, particularly in the context of his career in live entertainment. As I argued in the introduction

of this thesis, live performance is precisely representational practice in that it concurrently occupies a set of everyday social relations *and* the realm of imaginative ideals, bringing both together at the very moment of its iteration. The case studies explored in the first three chapters have shown that the medium of public display had the capability of constructing and disseminating desirable models of masculinity that were structured around an essential condition of prospective failure. Perhaps one answer to Griffin's question "where are the men performing hegemonic masculinity?", then, is on stage. For example, through his carefully orchestrated body-building acts, Sandow presented a masculinity that suggested the neoclassical ideal of athletic muscularity. Conversely, this was offset by suspicions around Sandow's alleged homosexual relationship with Martinus Sieveking that took place away from the glare of the variety hall. Though as Chapter Two showed his performances could court a range of gazes and desires – including those that were expressly stigmatised, such as gay male – Sandow (understandably) never publicly acknowledged this during his career, suggesting a disjuncture between his public and private performances of identity. In short, a close historiographical reading of touring entertainment might provide a further insight into the dynamic between myths or ideals of gender and the ways in which these play out as social practice, as Fredricks' relative success in the industry depended on a constant negotiation of both domains.

Additionally, and in line with David L. Chapman's diachronic survey of Sandow's life *Sandow the Magnificent* (1995) I suggest that a biographical approach to a single turn-of-the-century touring entertainer yields a more precise account of the resources, mechanisms and networks required to sustain a precarious career, and in turn to present a middle-class masculine identity. This is especially productive when cross-community adaptation is

factored in, with Fredricks and his various companies interacting with a range of cultural and geographical milieu. In a chronological, life-course manner, we can begin to understand not simply the constituent elements of touring infrastructures but test the extent to which the biographed subject had agency within that framework - as a 'self-manager' in her or his own right. The biographers Hans Renders and Binne de Haan summarise this shift in emphasis like so:

> biography ought not so much to be trying to understand how a person from the past who has been studied fits into his context and is in that way representative but would be better advised to consider to what extent a person was distinctive and influenced his context.
>
> (Renders and de Haan, 2014: 7)

In this case, the methodology at work here is to be distinguished from 'life-history' (Dhunpath, 2004) or 'life writing' narratives that are usually constructed either through first-hand oral histories or 'ego-documents' such as diaries, letters, memoranda and so on. Barring a couple of scrapbooks containing jokes and sketches that date after 1914[169] records that provide first-hand autobiographical accounts are absent from the Fredricks archive. Instead, the material remains of his life and career consist largely of administrative paperwork – official indentures, contracts, postal address records, and business cards – or visual evidence made up of family photo albums and professionally mounted souvenir photographs. On the

[169] Volume containing cuttings and articles on amusing stories, rhymes and verses, Somerset Archives, A/ATH/34/1/1.

one hand, the absence of Fredricks' spoken or written idiolect in the archive somewhat limit the biographer's ability to construct an 'authentic voice' and to gauge his embodied experiences with any accuracy. The conclusions we can draw about the subjective experience of Fredricks on or off the stage are effectively speculative within these constraints. On the other hand, with the support of a wide range of mentions of Fredricks in secondary journalistic sources we can make some judgements about his *practices* as a touring entertainer, drawing on administrative and visual traces to determine Fredricks' position within or against the hegemonic macro-structures of the British entertainment industry. As Renders explains,

> [The biographer] first collects and studies research materials associated with an individual and then proceeds to investigate how unique or representative that individual was in the context of his time.
>
> (Renders, 2014: 173)

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- Fig. 4.3 – Fredricks' concert party at Sydney Gardens, Bath c. 1905.[170]

With this in mind, there are three defining features to note about the working contexts of Carl Fredricks. Firstly, there is no record of him having ever performed in London or any of its key variety venues, such as the Oxford Music Hall or the Alhambra. He frequently used the 'wants' sections in London-based publications *The Era* and *The Stage* for various purposes over the course of his career, including notes of thanks to proprietors[171], the selling of props

[170] Photograph entitled "Concert Party, Sydney Gardens, Bath", c.1905, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/3/3.

[171] "Miscellaneous – Wanted Known", *The Era,* March 17th, 1906, pg. 30.

and stagecraft[172], and calls for talent[173]. Whilst both publicity channels were centrally administered in the capital, his working life was physically spent outside it, with Bath and later Weston-super-Mare considered 'home'[174]. His most significant period of touring was during his employment with Cha[rle]s W. Poole's Myriorama company between August 1899 to around 1904, a cycle that took in around two hundred 'provincial' cities and towns in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England and the Channel Islands[175]. These locations had varying levels of population, economic prosperity and reliance on certain industries, from the Welsh mining town of Blaenavon (in the which the No. 1 Company stopped at the town's Workmans' Hall) to the prominent capital cities of Dublin and Edinburgh where they performed at an influential concert venue and an indoor circus space respectively. This suggests a range of demographic compositions of the company's audiences, and thus a variety of readings of their material.

Tracking the working history of a South West-born entertainer in terms of persistent and comprehensive movement in 'the provinces' may prove to be an interesting alternative view on the perceived dominance of London in late Victorian entertainment. Even if we cannot completely disentangle him from the metropolitan-provincial binary so characteristic of popular entertainment at the turn of the twentieth century, his ability to sustain a career and support a young family without resorting to the competitive (though ultimately more lucrative) London scene appears to be a significant feature of his on-and-off-stage identities.

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[172] "Wanted to Sell", *The Era*, March 12th, 1910, pg. 32.

[173] "Wanted Pierrot and Alfresco Artists", *The Stage,* July 19th, 1906, pg. 21.

[174] His formal declaration of his name change in *The London Gazette* read: "I, CARLTON FREDRICKS, of No. 57, Orchard-street, Weston-super-Mare". 'Carlton Fredricks', *The London Gazette,* August 9th, 1921, pg. 6321.

[175] Volume entitled 'Addresses', c. 1907, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/5.

Somewhat anecdotally, via an incomplete manuscript for a biography of his father, Fredricks' son Jim suggested that even if the money was scarce the family's company took pride in the fact that they could be booked for fifty-two weeks of the year without relenting to the attractiveness of the London entertainment scene. This dedication to localism was apparently used as a key part of their publicity material[176]. As such, it might be said that Fredricks' career evolved alongside an early development of a provincial performance culture seeking to operate independently of - if not actively defiant to - the capital city. His legacy might also yield a more nuanced definition of 'celebrity'. Whilst Fredricks was never especially well-known on a national level, he developed a substantial reputation at seaside locations across the country and especially at Weston-super-Mare in the latter stages of his career. He is therefore a good example of a 'local' celebrity with his reputation focussed primarily in the South West, where he was fondly appreciated and continues to be remembered by a contained geographical community.

[176] "With Carlton Fredricks at the old Palace Theatre", *The Weston Mercury,* April 11th 2008 [https://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/with-carlton-fredricks-at-the-old-palace-theatre-1-319702], accessed February 16th 2019.

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- Fig 4.4 - Performance of the Fez Olympians, Fredricks' first concert party, possibly at Weymouth c.1892.[177]

Linked to this, the second notable context for Fredricks is that he specialised in popular family entertainment that consciously orientated itself away from 'vulgarity'. In this light, his frequent residencies at the seaside may partly explain his absence from the London entertainment scenes. Seaside resorts around the country offered middle-class families the prospect of short breaks and holidays away from bustling cities, a leisure option that would become an increasingly attractive commercial opportunity. At the same time, the rail networks grew in their coverage and efficiency (Brodie, 2011: 1-2.) The Midland Railway Company, who operated services in parts of the South West and was the teenage Fredricks's first employer, capitalised on this booming industry with the annual publication of "Country and Seaside Holidays", a booklet advising customers of optimum apartments and sunbathing

[177] Fredricks family photo album, c.1890-1900, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/5/1.

spots at seaside locations across their network[178]. These resorts and networks led to new innovations in - and a formal commercialisation of - family-friendly seaside entertainment, the key figureheads of which included Will Catlin, Adeler & Sutton as well as Fredricks' early promoter and collaborator Fred Carlton (Pertwee, 1999.) The advent of Fredricks' entertainment career in the 1890s corresponded with commercial developments in middle-class holidaymaking in which the linked styles of Pierrot performance and the "concert party" came increasingly to the fore. These two popular styles emerged from the same theatrical lineage. As theatre historian Bernard Ince explains, their

> appeal to all ages and social groups during the summer months at the seaside 'pitch', promenade or pier pavilion, was characterised by smartness of appearance, refinement in manner, freshness and originality of repertoire, and 'fun without vulgarity'.
>
> (Ince, 2015: 3)

Beginning with his collaboration with a concert party known as the "Fez Olympians" in 1892 [see Fig 4.4] Fredricks' terrain as an entertainer was in fare that had appeal across all age groups. His business cards specifically noted that his repertoire was "*Entirely free from anything appertaining to Vulgarity"*[179]. He was best known for his ventriloquial acts, though his on-stage skills extended to a strong singing ability and aptitude for magic tricks. The Edwardian seaside was a suitable location for such entertainment, particularly for holidaymaking families. Additionally, the interplay between the seaside and the national imaginary of empire

[178] "New Illustrated Guides for the Holidays", *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette,* May 11th, 1905, pg. 2.
[179] Leather case containing Carlton Fredricks business card and a card for 'The Magnets', listing Carlton Fredricks as the correspondent for Bath and Bristol, c. 1890, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/1.

is significant insofar as these directly shaped repertoire and audience expectations. Historian Dave Calvert writes

> characterized as a liminal space where everyday restraints could be relaxed, the seaside was also relatively contained between the borders with home and empire. In architecture and culture, it looked back to the nation's metropolitan centres while at the same time pointing beyond to the exoticism of distant colonies.
>
> (Calvert, 2013: 108)

Though his stint with Poole's Myriorama took him between a number of different performance contexts, Fredricks' work was often located at the borders of cross-cultural exchange, not merely symbolically through stagecraft such as make-up, costume and repertoire but also at a literal geographical border where the 'Other' was invoked under the sign of British imperial rule. As such, it is significant that Fredricks spent long phases of his career in fashionable coastal locations across the country, and the years covered in this chapter show him living and working in Lowestoft, Aberystwyth and Lytham St Anne.

Thirdly, and linked to the above, Fredricks' success as an entertainer was down to a diverse skill set that both on and off the stage. Putting aside his formative training as a telegraph clerk and grocer's assistant, he was at various points a company manager, a stage manager, a lessee for the Lyric Theatre in Bath, a promoter, a set builder, a costumier as well as performer. His performance skills encompassed the full range of the Edwardian popular entertainer's repertoire. Photographic collections and secondary newspaper reports suggest that he was adept as a musician, a singer, a comedian as well as his primary calling-card as a

"Ventriloquial Expert", an act that appears to have encompassed all three. This invites questions about the extent to which a career in the popular entertainment industry would have required a self-made and enterprising attitude, especially when an individual or company conducted business almost entirely outside of the London nexus. As we shall see, there is enough to suggest that Fredricks' success was rooted in his adeptness at a whole variety of roles within the profession.

With these contextual factors in mind, I will briefly lay out the parameters of the rest of the chapter. I will focus on three stages of Fredricks' life, with each addressing the ways in which on-stage representations and off-stage practices were in persistent dialogue, and how each served to constitute middle-class masculine identity. The first section focusses on the years between 1881 to 1899 and examines Fredricks' formative years. During this time, and particularly from his mid-twenties onwards, Fredricks took on casual engagements alongside his work as a salesman. I explore how these early professional experiences built his reputation at an incremental scale and even provided a kind of formative training for his future endeavours in entertainment. The second and third sections each focus on the same timeframe of Fredricks' career, that is, the tour with the Poole's Myriorama between 1899 and 1904. The second examines the content and infrastructure of the myriorama shows during this short period. With their persistent attention to shifts in popular tastes, current events and local references, the Poole's offered entertainments that consciously bridged the gap between amusement and education, reinforcing the iconography of British dominance during (and immediately after) the Boer War. Keeping with the theme of adaptation, the final section explores what I call 'portable domesticity', drawing particularly on the work of John Tosh. I ask how a life on the road for Fredricks and his family squared with the cultural stereotypes

of secure domestic masculinity when accommodation arrangements, preparation for childbirth and transit of property were characterised by their precarity.

1881-1899: Formative Years

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- Fig. 4.5 - A young Carl Fredricks taken from a family album, date unknown.[180]

Charles Frederick Pinkett was born in Bath in 1867, the second of three children to George (1825-1908) and Eliza (c.1835-1886[181]). He appeared to have had a respectable middle-class upbringing: his father George is listed in the 1871 census as a "Licensed Victualler" at

[180] Fredricks family photo album, c.1890-1900, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/5/1.
[181] "Deaths: […] Nov 7, at 11, Miles's-buildings, Eliza, the wife of Mr George Pinkett, aged 51." *Bath Chronicle,* November 11th, 1886, pg. 5.

the Rummer Tavern on Newmarket Row, situated in a prominent commercial district in the Bath city centre and close to the Abbey ('Charles Frederick Pinkett', 1871). Later, the family lived on nearby Gay Street in 1881 with George listed as a lodging-house manager. On the day of the census taking, the address housed the Pinkett family alongside a domestic servant and three lodgers, including a surgeon employed by the Royal United Hospital ('CFP', 1881.) His uncle Charles owned a prosperous running horse yard in Circus Mews, renting out stable space and carriages[182]. He may well have secured regular business from patrons of the Theatre Royal given its proximity to the Royal Crescent and the straightforward route from there to the Sawclose site. This focus on client-facing, hospitality-focussed enterprise suggest that the family moved in respectable social circles (or at least had regular interaction with them) and their desirable city-centre location could be found in a nexus of municipal, commercial and religious influence. Though there has been little scholarly attention on the precise social status of 'licensed victuallers' – the operational factors of tavern ownership would surely have varied between urban and rural settings, for example, and warrants further exploration – the Pinkett brothers' self-employment met the independently-minded ideal of middle-class masculinity. In the age of *laissez-faire* entrepreneurship, it was a line of work that was generally sceptical of government intervention into business affairs. Legislation such as the Licensing Act and the Sale of Food and Drugs Act of 1875 were cited by the Bath Licensed Victuallers Association as sources of "much anxiety and annoyance"[183].

This ethic of individual responsibility laid the foundation for Fredricks' working life. Whilst Chapter One focussed on sport's role in shaping a model of 'equilibrium', it is

[182] "Situations Wanted", *Bath Chronicle,* October 25th, 1888, pg. 4.
[183] "Bath Licensed Victuallers' Association", *Bath Chronicle,* July 25th, 1878, pg. 7.

important to explore the significance of work as a complementary element to the construction of Victorian middle-class masculinities. Scholarship on this topic has repeatedly focused on secure employment in relation to the attainment of respectable manliness. Sean Brady shows that this notion circulated through both textual media and everyday social interaction and that it pervaded across class lines. He suggests that "masculine 'independence' was the key indicator of achieving full masculinity" and that this was constituted through "work, sole maintenance of the family and free association with one's peers" (Brady, 2005: 28.) Organisations such as the Licensed Victuallers' Association appeared to facilitate the exchange of these shared values through their distinctly all-male constitution. Others, such as the Torquay Working Lads' Institute, shifted the same emphasis to young apprentices. The intention here was "to provide recreation and instruction for the large number of apprentice lads who roamed about the streets after their day's work was done", with classes and exercises arranged "to help those who help themselves" in an echo of the typical liberalist position[184]. Accounting for these municipal efforts to encourage such an ethic, John Tosh notes that for boys "there was little concept of adolescence in the modern sense of an extended transition between childhood and adulthood" and that "parents, employers and teachers were often intent on forcing their charges through the remaining stages of manhood as quickly as possible" (Tosh, 1999: 105.) Though Brady or Tosh do not allow for regional or urban/rural distinctions in their analyses, a secure self-concept of masculinity could be won through independence in both professional and social circles. A range of institutions could inculcate these values in boys during their transition from the classroom to the workplace. Indeed, as historian Michael Childs has shown, the classroom and the workplace might have overlapped

[184] "Torquay Working Lads' Institute", *Torquay Times and South Devon Advertiser,* January 15th, 1886, pg. 3.

for a boy in the course of a day through the 'half-time' system, where children and young people of either sex could combine their education with menial jobs to boost household income.

There are two notable examples of the early working life of Fredricks that offer some qualification to the insecure and unsystematised labour of the mid-to-late Victorian entertainment industry. Particularly in terms of middle-class ideals of masculine status, it raises the question of whether an entertainment career would have offered a man that same 'hegemonic' security described above. Though we cannot make any assertions about his subjective response to his early employment, Fredricks was at least initially engaged in a conventional, middle-class rite of passage. As was common for boys upon leaving compulsory education, his working life began at the age of fourteen, taken on as a 'Learner' by the Midland Railway to train as a telegraph clerk ('CFP', 1881). On a £30 annual salary and stationed variously at Bromsgrove, Gloucester and Langley Hill, his brief employment records show a lack of competence in this line of work. He was moved between these three locations in the hope he would improve and was "cautioned that if no improvements [he would] not be retained in the service". He resigned at the request of his employers in May 1882, a little over a year after joining, citing "late arrivals on duty and general neglect" ('Pinkett, Charles Frederick', 1882.) This may simply be the case of a fourteen-year-old pushed out of his depth too quickly, driven by the expectation for boys to start earning at the close of compulsory education. What this incident does suggest, as social investigator J.G. Cloete observed around two decades later, was that the initial stages of the boy labour experience were often aimless or tentative. Cloete wrote that "a boy, on leaving school, will often go out to look for work with no fixed idea in his head, and simply drift into the first opening he comes across without

the slightest effort at discrimination" (Cloete in Urwick ed., 1904: 110.) Other investigators such as Reginald Bray criticised the mechanistic nature of the work available to teenage boys and its tendency "to destroy to a large extent the effect of the school training" (Bray, 1907: 154.)

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- Fig 4.6 – Apprenticeship indenture for Charles Frederick Pinkett, signed February 8th, 1882.[185]

Cloete and Bray were writing two decades after Fredricks was dismissed from the Midland Railway. Part of their criticism of boy labour was directed at the decline of the traditional apprenticeship system and its formal training characteristics, or at least its limited

[185] Apprenticeship indenture for Charles Fredrick Pinkett, February 8th 1883, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/6/2.

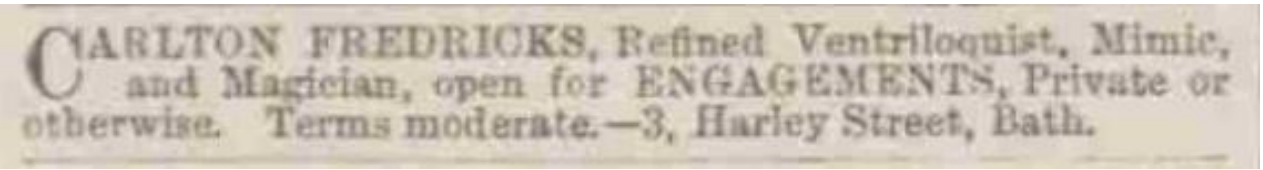
accessibility to boys of certain economic classes. Given the family's proximity to the local commercial sector and the well-reputed nature of his father's work, an alternative employment arrangement could be made possible for the young Charlie. On January 1st 1883, when Fredricks was fifteen years old, he became apprenticed to a grocer and provision merchant based on the north side of Pulteney Bridge, a key commercial hub for local businesses in the centre of Bath (Manco, 1995: 142-144.) The terms of the apprenticeship were to the national standard, meeting specific regulations and laid out on an official Indenture. The agreement suggests that Fredricks was bound to Stafford's business for two years, with the terms stipulating a certain behavioural conduct that forbade gambling and the "haunting" of taverns and playhouses[186]. These conditions did not extend to the provision of food and board, as Fredricks continued to live at the family home at 11 Miles' Buildings within walking distance of Pulteney Bridge. References to such arrangements have thus been crossed out on the form. The indenture was signed in the presence of Pinkett's new boss, Mr Samuel James Stafford, and perhaps significantly also his father George [see Fig 4.6] We might read these first steps into professional life as an initiation into conventional middle-class masculinity, where learning the ropes of a prosperous line of work would be foundational to a secure marriage, home and family in the future. Those ideals aside, his experiences on Pulteney Bridge reveal the challenges faced by independent business owners in the context of rapidly modernising industrial practices. Fredricks had left the business certainly by 1891, due to Mr Stafford's bankruptcy as listed in newspapers in May of that year[187].

[186] Ibid.

[187] "The Bankruptcy Acts 1883 and 1890 – Receiving Orders", *Huddersfield Chronicle,* May 2nd ,1891, pg. 8.

Though the provision industries were clearly distinct from the entertainment business, it is useful to draw on these conventional apprenticeship procedures as a point of comparison to the 'freelance' experiences Fredricks would go on to have. For instance, the industry did not have the same level of formalised training in comparison with the manual or customer-facing trades that Fredricks was introduced to. There were few callouts for apprentice theatre workers posted in *The Era;* when these did appear, they were usually for young circus performers or were posted by hopeful parents already working in the industry on their children's behalf[188]. Further, there is little contemporary information about the specifics of early-career progression beyond the often sensationalist biographies of celebrity performers. The formative years of music-hall star Dan Leno were outlined in his own souvenir biography published in 1899 (*Hys Booke)* as well as in J Hickory Wood's eulogistic account from 1905, where each describe the nomadic life for an aspirant entertainer in the 'embryonic' northern music halls of the 1880s, just before Leno's 'break' as a "Champion Clog-dancer of the World" (Hickory Wood, 1905: 13.) Without a prescribed apprenticeship framework beyond bespoke, face-to-face agreements, entry into the profession was depended either on interpersonal connections or the continuation of a family legacy (the Chute or Irving dynasties are prominent examples of this from the period.) The more common route, then, involved a self-motivated, self-taught approach necessary to build up a reputation and to identify the relevant networks, suggesting that the entertainment business operated on the same liberalist lines that Fredricks had previously been immersed in.

[188] One example of this read: "WANTED, to Apprentice the Son of a Professional to a Capable Scenic Artist. Aged Fifteen. Good idea of Drawing, &c." *The Era,* December 20th 1890, pg. 21.


CARLTON FREDRICKS, Refined Ventriloquist, Mimic, and Magician, open for ENGAGEMENTS, Private or otherwise. Terms moderate.—3, Harley Street, Bath.

- Fig 4.7 - Classified advertisement for Carlton Fredricks, published under a local newspaper's 'To Be Sold' section in 1891.[189]

Bearing in mind these typically non-linear routes into the industry, Fredricks' early entertainment practices appear to have been at an incremental scale. The first mention in print of a foray into the world of popular entertainment was in 1891 when Fredricks was twenty-three years old. He was casually engaged as a ventriloquist at local flower shows, firstly in Frome and then in Kempsford[190]. He also performed ad-hoc 'sets' at co-operative society events, most notably at Stroud in Gloucestershire where he is first billed under the moniker "Carlton Fredricks". The publicity for this engagement promised "his refined Sketch, entitled "FUNNY FOLKS", introducing his Life-size Mechanical Figures" that would follow early-evening tea – tickets for tea and entertainment were sold for 9d[191]. Another early listing at a drill hall billed Fredricks as part of "a troupe of negro minstrels" formed alongside a local volunteer army battalion, playing the "tambos" under the name "Cyclist Pinkett". He also performed his own item entitled "Mirth, Music and Mimicry" during the second half of the evening[192]. This initial fare showed the beginnings of a unique brand that he would carry

[189] "To be Sold", *Bath Chronicle,* December 24th, 1891, pg. 4. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).
[190] "Frome – The Eighth Annual Oddfellows' Flower Show and Fete", *Warminster and Westbury Journal,* August 1st 1891, n.p.
[191] "Announcements – Stroud Co-operative Society", *Stroud News and Gloucestershire Advertiser,* October 30th, 1891, pg. 5.
[192] "Entertainment at the Drill Hall", *Bath Chronicle,* April 7th, 1892, pg. 8.

forward in his career. His specialism in universally suitable entertainment was made up of visual trickery and vocal dexterity, and he found appreciative audiences in and around Bath at the beginning of his career, either in small community contexts or as purveyor of after-dinner amusement in private settings.

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- Fig. 4.8 - Souvenir photograph, or possible publicity card, depicting Fredricks and his mechanical puppets, 1890s.[193]

The available evidence suggests that he combined these early engagements with a 'day job' as a salesperson, apparently staying within food sales and distribution in Bath. In the

[193] Bundle of unidentified photographs of theatre performances and groups of the actors, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/3/2.

"Quality, Trade or Profession" column on his eldest children's baptism records in March 1893 and December 1898 respectively (when Arthur was four years old) he is listed as a "commercial traveller" ('Gertrude Adelaid Pinkett', 1893; 'Arthur Charles Pinkett', 1898.) It is not until 1901, during a brief break from the Poole's Myriorama for the birth of his second son Leo, that he is recorded as an entertainer on official documentation (barring the 1901 census where he is recorded under his stage name with "Ventriloquist" as his employment.) One interpretation of this professionalised display is that it upheld a public image of family respectability under the watchful, rationalising gaze of the Church. As we have seen in Chapter One through the discursive practices of the region's YMCAs, gainful employment was a core value of true Christian manliness and this was perhaps not immediately forthcoming in the entertainment industries. However, it could also be argued that the comparatively more secure employment of door-to-door provision sales mutually benefitted Fredricks' burgeoning entertainment career. A close parallel can be drawn between the wordplay of popular theatrical practices at the time and the performativity of sales patter. As Walter Nash outlines in his discussion of the rhetorical structures of advertising, there is an interior organisation of the sales pitch (the "microtaxis") that informs each stage of an overall scheme (the "macrotaxis") to include an initial pitch, a concessional element to appeal to the client's desires and a closure or punchline (Nash, 1989: 26.) This skilful understanding of timing, structure and the tastes of the customer are easily applicable to the interior logic of the music-hall song or comic turn, alongside an implicit attention given to ever-changing fashions and ideologies (Bailey, 1986: 49-69.) Whilst sales work and entrepreneurialism were valued in discourses of respectability, it may also have provided a framework for a rudimentary kind of performer training. In other words, the entertainment industry could draw on the logics and practices of conventional business conduct not only for a grounding in their own

commercial activities, but by learning the prized conventions of wit and persuasion one could actually help to sharpen performance technique.

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- Fig 4.9 - Certificate of Merit awarded to Fredricks following the Bath Novelties and New Inventions Exhibition in Bath, April 1894. [194]

The synergy between Fredricks' sales work and the entertainment business was borne out in two ways during 1894 when he was still in his mid-twenties. Firstly, under the name C.F Pinkett, he took part in the Bath Novelties and New Inventions Exhibition held at Brook-street Hall during April and May where "nothing but the latest productions will be accepted

[194] Bath Novelties and new Inventions Exhibition certificate of merit awarded to Mr C F Pinkett, April 1894, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/6/3.

as exhibits"[195]. It is unclear precisely what Fredricks exhibited – his 'Mechanical Puppets' may well have met the event's key criteria of up-to-date innovation - but local reporting on the event suggested a level of prestige where the programme included a display of fine arts, such as glass sculpture[196]. Awarded a Certificate of Merit for "General Excellence of Exhibit"[197], his participation in the event suggests an ability to work across, and appeal to, a wide range of artistic cultures [see Fig. 4.9] This is particularly notable given that his movement in such circles coincided with his work as a commercial salesperson. A memorandum dated just a few months later and signed by "Tea-Dealer and Provision Merchant" George Griffiths read that Fredricks was a "first-rate salesman" who had been working with the business for around six years, with Griffiths finding him "honest, sober [and] obliging", values that matched his specialism in entertainment that had "nothing appertaining to vulgarity".[198] This balancing of customer-facing, sales-based work as his primary job with casual engagements as a performer and stagecraftsman points towards the development of an outgoing personality and a spirit of 'up-to-dateness'. More generally, it demonstrates the non-linear progression of a career in popular entertainment for those who did not directly benefit from nepotism or significant financial advantage. Material on Fredricks dating from the 1890s, then, charts a period of gradual transition that combined casual engagements with the necessity to earn for a young family.

[195] "Bath Novelty and New Inventions Exhibition", *Bath Chronicle,* February 22nd 1894, pg. 3.
[196] "The Bath Novelties and New Inventions Exhibition", *Bath Chronicle,* April 19th, 1894, pg. 5.
[197] Bath Novelties and new Inventions Exhibition certificate of merit awarded to Mr C F Pinkett, April 1894, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/6/3.
[198] Reference for C F Pinkett, written by George H Griffith, grocer, Bath, November 28th 1894, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/6/4.

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- Fig 4.10 – Souvenir photograph of Carl Fredricks with a small, pop-up display and group of mechanical puppets, printed in Lowestoft, date unknown.[199]

It is difficult to pin down a precise date for Fredricks' move into entertainment full-time, though there is evidence of him performing further afield than the South West from 1897 onwards. Taking up various engagements away from home appeared to have required a certain conduct in order to succeed, with the fostering of professional relationships dependent on satisfactory adherence to contracts and the acquisition of references from past employers. An example of the former is his week-long engagement at the Phoenix Music Hall in Dover in January 1897. A custom contract signed by the proprietor and manager Joe Chevers, dated two months in advance of the engagement, shows that Fredricks was to be paid £3 10s for his work and that he would be subject to a set of conditions specific to the venue. For instance,

[199] Bundle of unidentified photographs of theatre performances and groups of the actors, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/3/2. With Lowestoft as the printing location, it could indicate that this was taken during Fredricks' stint as Business Manager at the Olympian Gardens in Lowestoft in 1899, just before he joined Poole's Myriorama in August of the same year.

these regulations placed very strict limits on the content of the acts. These included "No allusion whatever to be made to Religion, or any Religious Sect", "No offensive allusions to the administration of the Law of the Country" and "Coarse jests and rough language to be particularly avoided". Perhaps tellingly given the commercial implications of the music hall business, Fredricks was expressly forbidden to perform anywhere within ten miles of the venue during that week, with the regulations going so far as to state that "any allusion to engagements at other establishments is absolutely forbidden" and that "Any breach of this rule will entail the forfeiture of a night's salary"[200]. The contracts issued by Harry Williams to performers engaged at the Lyric Theatre in Bath in 1902 (where Fredricks had briefly been acting-manager in 1898[201]) contained similar terms, making an especially fine point about elements of 'knowingness' in the artiste's repertoire. His contract stipulated that

> Any Artiste introducing, or suggesting, vulgar or obscene expressions, actions, or words, into his or her songs, dances, or performance generally, will be subject to instant dismissal, and liable to forfeit the whole of their salary. THIS RULE WILL BE VIGOROUSLY ENFORCED. [see Fig 4.11]

As reflected on his business card, Fredricks' entertainment style was one that avoided vulgarity and obscenity, and this appears to have been a defining feature of late Victorian variety culture in the regions. The general managers were able to ensure this principle through

[200] Memorandum of agreement between Joe Cheevers of the Phoenix Music Hall, Dover and Carlton Fredricks, October 14th 1896, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/2.
[201] "Presentation", *The Era,* March 12th, 1898, pg. 16.

the issuing of written agreements, reserving the right to withhold pay if the agreed-upon limitations on repertoire were transgressed.

Aside from control over acceptable content, these contracts reveal two key details about working conditions for 'jobbing' entertainers. Firstly, the performers were subject to a culture of loyalty and exclusivity within the terms of such contracts, underpinned by a wariness that proprietors had towards free advertisting for their competitors. Secondly, at a time just before the establishment of the Variety Artistes' Federation in 1906 that sought to regulate working conditions and bring in a new professionalisation of the industry (Rutherford, 1986:100) the Dover contract implies that artists could lose part, if not all, of their contracted pay in circumstances essentially beyond their control. These included sickness, permanent or temporary closure of the hall, or any objection to certain material from the public authorities[202]. This is not to mention the costs for travel to the venue or accommodation arrangements (which I explore in the final section of the chapter.) Before union activity, renumeration was never totally guaranteed and performers apparently had no legal recourse in the event of cancellation or unreasonable dismissal. The 'no pay, no play' rule made an essential link between the performer's labour and music-hall management's drive towards balancing the books. In the case of Fredricks, investing in travel from Bath to Dover would have essentially been trusting to luck under these terms, with little resemblance to the more secure sales work he had undertaken a few years earlier.

[202]Memorandum of agreement between Joe Cheevers of the Phoenix Music Hall, Dover and Carlton Fredricks, October 14th 1896, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/2.

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- Fig 4.11 - Section of memorandum of agreement issued by Lyric Theatre of Varieties, Bath, 1902.[203]

Considering the pattern of refinement and respectability that characterised Fredricks' on-stage practices, some connection might be established between the efforts of municipal improvement discussed in Chapter One and the role of live entertainment in supporting those strategies. This was especially the case at seaside locations where the increased popularity of pier pavilions fostered a demand for wholesome and family-targeted content to fill the bills. Much of Fredricks' employment following his brief stint in Dover were of this sort, particularly during the summers of 1897, 1898 and 1899. Referring to his engagement in the

[203]Lyric Theatre of Varieties, Contracts of employment for performers, Bath, November 10th 1902 – Feb 16th 1903, Bath Archives and Local Studies, 0078.

Welsh coastal town of Aberystwyth during 1897, a personal reference for Fredricks was provided by Mr Frank Herbert, secretary of the town's Improvement Company, charged with looking after entertainments at the town's recently built Pier Pavilion:

> Mr Carl Fredricks was engaged at the above Pavilion for 18 weeks in 1897 to five daily performances with his up to date Ventriloquist show – when he met with huge success on all hands – I have every confidence in recommending him to Pavilion Theatre Managers and others for the refinement and cleverness of his Entertainment.
>
> Frank Bennett, Secretary[204]

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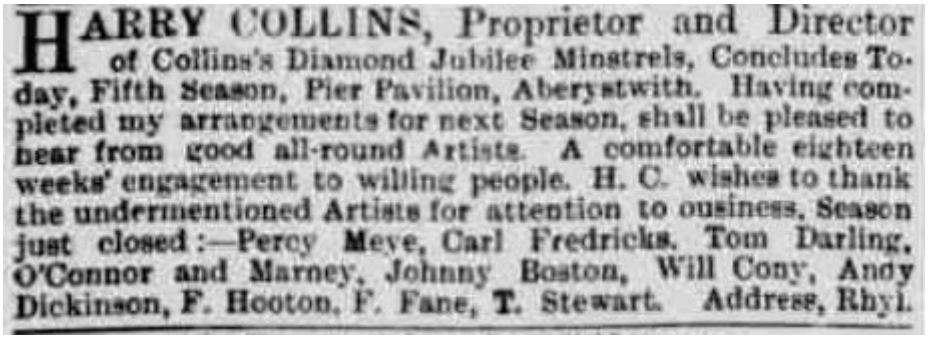
- Fig 4.12 - Advertisement for Aberystwyth Promenade Pier including reference to Harry Collins' Minstrels, July 1897.[205]

[204] Reference written by Frank Bennett of the Royal Pier Pavilion, Aberystwyth, February 1899, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/4.
[205] "Aberystwyth Improvement Company", *Montgomery County Times,* July 3rd 1897, pg. 8.



HARRY COLLINS, Proprietor and Director of Collins's Diamond Jubilee Minstrels, Concludes To-day, Fifth Season, Pier Pavilion, Aberystwith. Having completed my arrangements for next Season, shall be pleased to hear from good all-round Artists. A comfortable eighteen weeks' engagement to willing people. H. C. wishes to thank the undermentioned Artists for attention to ousiness, Season just closed:—Percy Meye, Carl Fredricks, Tom Darling, O'Connor and Marney, Johnny Boston, Will Cony, Andy Dickinson, F. Hooton, F. Fane, T. Stewart. Address, Rhyl.

- Fig 4.13 - Harry Collins expressing thanks to Fredricks in *The Era* for eighteen-week-long engagement at the Pier Pavilion, Aberystwyth, November 1897.[206]

Mr Bennett referred to the eighteen weeks that Fredricks spent as part of Harry Collins' Minstrels in the summer of 1897, an all-male troupe that employed "good all-round Artists" for performances on the Pier [see Fig 4.12 and Fig 4.13.] The Improvement Company was headed by famed civil engineer George Croydon-Marks, whose construction of a glass pavilion at the Pier consisted of "three aisles surmounted by glass domed roofs, the elevations being ribbed and decorated in the Gothic style" and built to accommodate 3,000 people[207]. It was opened in 1896 by Princess Alexandra of Wales with Croydon-Marks knighted a few months later, highlighting its prestige and royal seal of approval[208]. This is a clear example of moves to elevate the prosperity of the town and disseminate wholesome entertainment to the local populace and to its visitors. For instance, a newspaper account described a performance for 2,000 Sunday school children

[206] "Harry Collins", *The Era,* September 18th, 1897, pg. 29. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

[207] http://www.theheritagetrail.co.uk/piers/aberystwythpier.html, accessed March 27th 2019.

[208] "Knighthood for Mr Croydon Marks", *Montgomery County Times and Shropshire and Mid-Wales Advertiser,* January 2nd, 1897, pg. 2.

> who had assembled there at the at the invitation of Mr Croydon-Marks […] to listen to songs, watch the tricks of conjurors, view with wondering eyes the pictures thrown on the sheet of the magic lantern, and spend the first of what Mr Marks hopes will be the forerunner of many similar events in the future.[209]

These entertainments became a core aspect of the Pavilion's public engagements and were particularly crucial during the early stages of its business. It is significant that Fredricks performed with a troupe named specifically for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations whilst in Aberystwyth, one part of an awesome nationwide spectacle to celebrate the landmark event [see Fig 4.13.] The fact that Fredricks was engaged for a sustained period at a newly built performance venue with royal advocacy and a substantial seating capacity signalled a departure from his short-term gigs at smaller music halls, or at least demonstrates a successful adaptation to a different spatial and professional context. An advertisement published in *The Era* in April 1898 invited the interest of "First-Class Companies" to fill the Pavilion's vacant September dates, boasting its "Full Dramatic License" and perhaps significantly (if unsurprisingly) revealing that the Aberystwyth Improvement Company in fact kept its head office in London[210]. There was a clear synthesis, then, between municipal improvement efforts and the demand for 'first-class' entertainment in the mould of concert parties or minstrel troupes. As Bennett's positive personal reference and Collins' publication of thanks for service indicate, this summer residency in Aberystwyth reveals not only

[209] "A Happy Crowd", *Montgomery County Times and Shropshire and Mid-Wales Advertiser,* January 16th, 1897, pg. 8.
[210] "Aberystwyth Royal Pier Pavilion", *The Era,* April 16th, 1898, pg. 28.

Fredricks' capacity as an all-round performer but that his skills supported a counter-modern trend of municipal improvement, foregrounding a self-aware articulation of respectability in performance.

These two years before the Fredricks family's extensive touring period particularly demonstrate Carl's eclectic skill set off the stage, and in turn a significant elevation of his reputation. Between his engagements at Dover and Aberystwyth, he briefly took on the role of 'acting-manager' at the Empire Theatre, Bristol. This temporary engagement concluded in May 1897 with Mr E. Leon, proprietor of the Empire, presenting Fredricks with "a handsome marble clock" [211]. Fredricks replied through a 'Wanted, Known' column in *The Era,* acknowledging the "Handsome Presentation" and knowingly signing it off with "What's the time?"[212]. A similar presentation was offered following his tenure in a similar role at the Lyric Theatre of Varieties in Bath with the gifts consisting of "a handsome gold-mounted umbrella […] a silver mounted walking stick […] [a] red leather pocket case […] a massive 18-carat gold signet ring and 18-carat gold set of sleeve links from lady patrons, and a handsome travelling case from Mr Holmes and the staff of the Lyric Theatre"[213]. In parallel with the prizes on offer at the Amateur Athletic sporting events, these gifts reflected the trappings of middle-class domesticity and shaped an outward appearance of masculine refinement. This not only demonstrates the extent to which Fredricks was valued as a collaborator, manager and performer, but marked a clear step forward in his development as an entertainment professional. These material signifiers of respectability presented to him by colleagues and audiences alike suggest an increase in social capital, situating entertainment as a viable and

[211] "Presentation", *The Era,* May 22nd, 1897, pg. 18.
[212] "Wanted – Known", *The Era,* May 22nd, 1897, pg. 28.
[213] "Presentation", *The Era,* March 12th 1898, pg. 16.

even socially desirable profession. This was a far cry from the mechanistic labour of telegraph clerking that a teenage Fredricks had been engaged in fifteen years previously.

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- Fig 4.14 - Carlton Fredricks in a posed photograph of Paul Mill's Olympian Concert Party, 1899.[214]

The formative years of Fredricks' life demonstrate a gradual and non-linear career trajectory. Whilst his initial work as a telegraph clerk, grocer's assistant and commercial traveller signified a basic training in 'respectable' middle-class trades for young men, the skills he acquired in business administration and interpersonal communication transferred effectively to a relatively successful period of consistent theatrical employment, at first via casual engagements before longer-term residencies with minstrel troupes and concert parties. This period of employment culminated in the summer of 1899 with a summer engagement as business-manager of Paul Mill's Olympian Gardens concert party based in Lowestoft. The

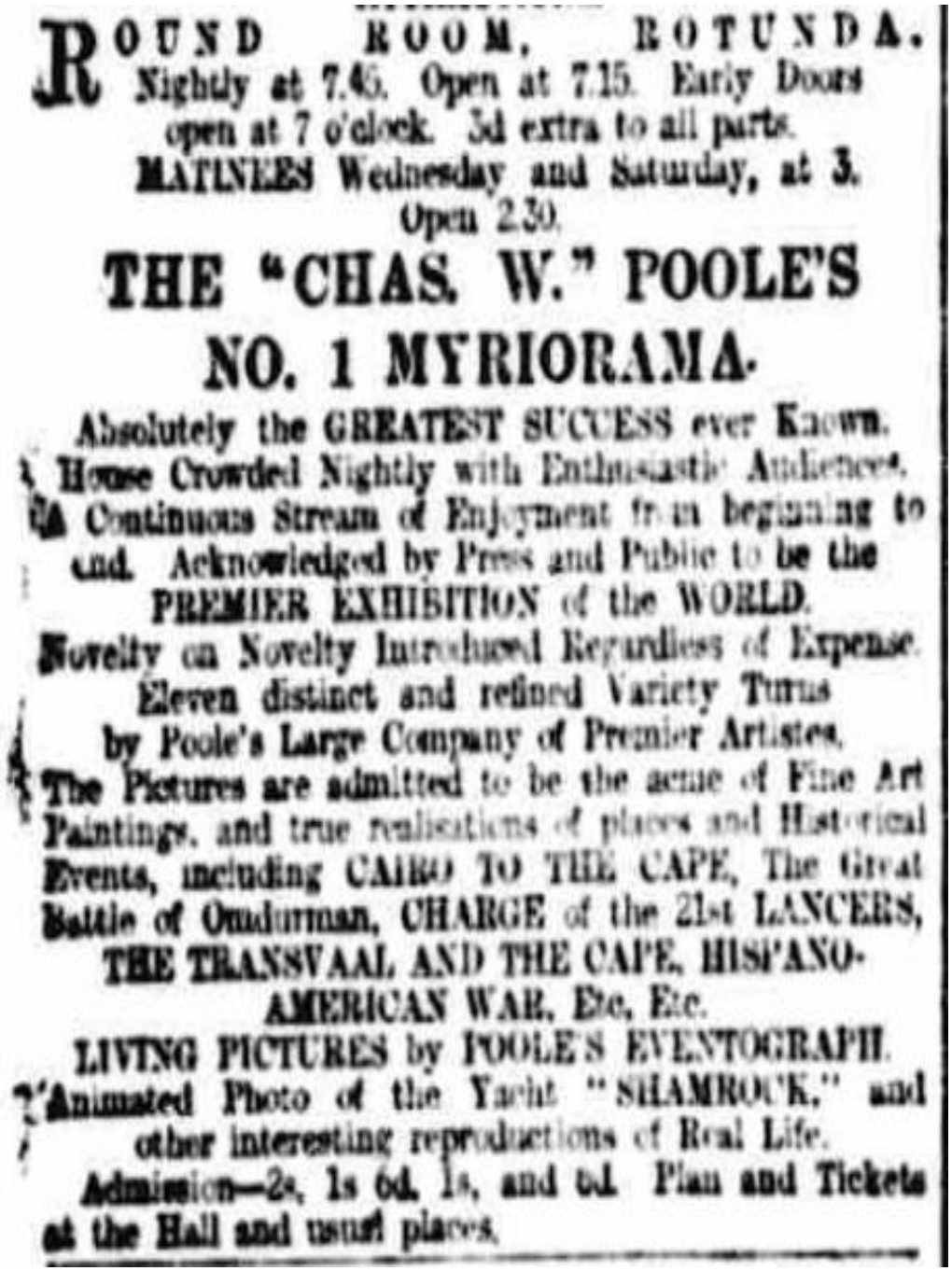
[214] He is sat second from left. The reverse of the photograph reads "Olympian Gardens Lowestoft – Carlton Fredricks Business Manager".

company dressed in fashionable maritime attire and offered a suitable brand of refined variety entertainments, including sketch comedies and musical interludes that related to the "habitations, fascinations, celebrations and lucubrations generally of natives and visitors at the seaside" disseminated in the customary up-to-date, audience-aware style[215]. This is the first indication in which Fredricks took his family away from Bath for a lengthy period of time, joining the "vast influx of holidaymakers" that descended on Lowestoft for the summer break. The local newspaper commented on a spectacle of fashion and wholesome pleasure-seeking, writing that "the Esplanade presented an extraordinary scene with its ever-moving masses, in which the gay attire of the ladies and the men's "blazers" mingled with kaleidoscopic effects"[216]. The concert party cast at the Olympian Gardens was not strictly limited to adult men. Fredricks' seven-year-old daughter Della was also part of proceedings in Lowestoft with her act described as "a winsome child [who] sings about her dolly with irresistible sweetness", earning her an encore[217].

Alongside Fredricks' stints at Aberystwyth and in managerial roles at venues closer to home, the family's half-excursion, half work-trip to Lowestoft may have represented a full realisation of the young family's burgeoning middle-class sensibility, with their on-stage dress and repertoire conforming to the stylish cultures of the British seaside resort and its fashionable display [see 4.14.] The contexts in which he forged his entertainment career ran parallel to the principles of rational recreation that were instrumental in fostering an aesthetics of respectability. As I have shown, his acts were presented at co-operative societies, municipal improvement companies and local military organisations, further illuminating how

[215] "The Olympian Gardens", *Eastern Evening News,* August 9th, 1899, pg. 3.
[216] "Lowestoft", *Eastern Evening News,* August 8th, 1899, n.p.
[217] "The Olympian Gardens", *Eastern Evening News,* August 9th, 1899, pg. 3.

entertainment in the 1890s was often shaped by discourses of municipal uplift. Fredricks' ability to operate in a variety of roles to manage both the on-stage and off-stage business of his act and those of others, and doing so whilst moving between a range of theatrical and geographical contexts, stood him in good stead for employment with Poole's Myriorama, themselves specialist purveyors of family-friendly variety entertainment and cross-community adaptation. His daughter's performance at the Olympian Gardens was a matter of days before the family left the south-east coast for Dublin, and onto the next phase of their itinerant lives.



ROUND ROOM, ROTUNDA.
Nightly at 7.45. Open at 7.15. Early Doors open at 7 o'clock. 3d extra to all parts.
MATINEES Wednesday and Saturday, at 3. Open 2.30.

THE "CHAS. W." POOLE'S
NO. 1 MYRIORAMA.

Absolutely the GREATEST SUCCESS ever Known.
House Crowded Nightly with Enthusiastic Audiences.
A Continuous Stream of Enjoyment from beginning to end. Acknowledged by Press and Public to be the PREMIER EXHIBITION of the WORLD.
Novelty on Novelty Introduced Regardless of Expense.
Eleven distinct and refined Variety Turns by Poole's Large Company of Premier Artistes.
The Pictures are admitted to be the acme of Fine Art Paintings, and true realisations of places and Historical Events, including CAIRO TO THE CAPE, The Great Battle of Omdurman, CHARGE of the 21st LANCERS, THE TRANSVAAL AND THE CAPE, HISPANO-AMERICAN WAR, Etc, Etc.
LIVING PICTURES by POOLE'S EVENTOGRAPH.
Animated Photo of the Yacht "SHAMROCK," and other interesting reproductions of Real Life.
Admission—2s, 1s 6d, 1s, and 6d. Plan and Tickets at the Hall and usual places.

- Fig 4.15 – Advertisement for the No 1 Myriorama's stint at the Round Room Rotunda, Dublin, August-September 1899.[218]

[218] "Amusements – Round Room Rotunda", *Dublin Daily Express,* August 17th, 1899, pg. 4. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

Still in the early stages of his career as an entertainer, Fredricks joined Charles W Poole's No. 1 Myriorama Company at Dublin in August 1899[219], one of seven troupes of the Poole's Myriorama network that were criss-crossing Britain and Ireland at the time (Poole, 1937: 12.) The "Wanted" section of *The Era*, a seemingly crucial resource for British entertainers at all career stages during the period, was used by Fredricks on August 12th, 1899 to mark the occasion. He published three separate announcements, the first of which was to promote himself and his wife in their new employment: it read "*WANTED, Known, Carl Fredricks, Refined Entertainer, and Cordelia, in her Graceful Dance Luminous, Two Complete Successes Nightly, C.W Poole's No. 1. Myriorama, Rotunda Dublin."*[220] Fredricks also invested in a column to thank his previous employer, Paul Mill Esq., for "Releasing Him as Business-Manager, Olympian Gardens, Lowestoft, Season 1899". In this, he offered acknowledgement of a previous engagement with a Weymouth concert party and grateful receipt of farewell gifts from that company[221] The various industry knowledges printed in such pages by *The Era* or other publications offered professional entertainers an essential and convenient resource. The periodical, administered at its London offices but circulated nationally, allowed for the communication of important information regarding entertainers' availability, current whereabouts and successful professional relationships without the reliance on an improving (though still slow) postal service. In other words, this resource allowed for the upkeep and mutual acknowledgement of professional interests and would prove crucial for Fredricks and Gertrude as 'Cordelia' to sustain their reputations.

[219] Volume entitled 'Addresses', c. 1907, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/5.
[220] "Music Hall Artistes' Wants", *The Era,* August 12th, 1899, pg. 27
[221] "Miscellaneous", *The Era,* August 12th, 1899, pg. 27.

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- Fig 4.16 - Souvenir photograph of Gertrude Fredricks as her stage persona Madamoiselle Cordelia, demonstrating her costuming as "Kaleidoscopic Dancer", Northwich, January 1902.[222]

It was a significant moment for the couple and their two children to join the Myriorama for at least two reasons. Firstly, their stint coincided with the Second Boer War, and the company's repertoire of moving pictures, lectures and songs was heavily directed towards a

[222] Bundle of photographs of Mademoiselle Cordellia, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/5/6.

pro-imperialist message. Secondly, in the spirit of mass technological advancement and shifting popular tastes, the Poole's drew on a range of visual media to fill their programme, including dioramic paintings, cinematographs and variety turns. During their time with the company, the Fredricks themselves specialised in acts that depended on visual trickery: Carl continued his ventriloquist act and Gertrude was a 'kaleidoscopic dancer' billed under the name "Madamoiselle Cordelia" [see Fig. 16.] The expression of patriotic sentiment through innovative scenography depended on a principle of adaptation – to shifting current affairs on the one hand, and to new technologies on the other.

The Poole's entertainments operated on an ethic of 'amusement with instruction', combining lectures about historically significant places both home and abroad with refined, family-friendly variety acts. In this light, children were identified as their key audience target. Child tickets cost sixpence compared with the top price of two shillings for adults[223] and the Poole's often provided free tickets for local schools, including during the Fredricks' stint in Ireland[224]. A trademark of the Poole's experience, however, was their moving panoramas that incorporated mechanical ingenuity with reimaginings of high-class paintings. These were sometimes acquired through collaboration with the Royal Society of Artists but were most often second-hand interpretations by a dedicated team of scenic artists based at the Poole's studios in Malmesbury, Wiltshire.[225] The visual effect was achieved by mounting the paintings on canvas and moving them across the stage on hidden mechanical rollers, with the mechanism paused at various points so a lecturer could give an account of the scene and its significance. To borrow Veronica della Dora's description, this had the effect of "placing the

[223] Four tickets for Poole's Myriorama at Ipswich, 1897, Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, 78259.
[224] "Treat to Artane Boys", *Dublin Daily Nation,* September 8th, 1899, pg. 2.
[225] "Wanted, Scenic Artist", *The Era,* March 17th, 1900, pg. 24.

observer in a fixed position to subject him or her to a pre-established temporal unfolding of optical experience […] as if through the window of a moving train" (della Dora, 2007: 294) Newspaper reports suggest that a single evening of the Poole's entertainment lasted for around three uninterrupted hours, with a team of up to thirty stage-hands ensuring swift scene changes through their operation of the dioramic apparatus.

At Dublin, the company were engaged in the Round Room at the Rotunda, a key site of municipal influence in the city that was part hospital and part function space. The Round Room's track record of highbrow entertainment including orchestral concerts was indicative of the refinement that the Poole's entertainment aimed for. The No. 1 Myriorama's theme in the summer of 1899 was "Cairo to the Cape", providing the audience with a whistle-stop tour of Africa and a potted history of key events. Through these, they frequently foregrounded British endeavour. The bills published in local newspapers for the company's month-long stay announced

> Eleven distinct and refined Variety Turns [including Carl and Gertrude] […] the acme of Fine Art Paintings and true realisations of places and Historical Events including CAIRO TO THE CAPE, The Great Battle of Omdurman, CHARGE of the 21st LANCERS.

On their Eventograph, the Poole's included a few pictures of local interest such as the British-Irish racing yacht Shamrock.[226] A notable feature of the Poole's entertainments were variety acts that matched - or were integrated into - relevant moments in the pictorial tour. For example, according to the *Waterford Standard*, Cordelia's kaleidoscopic dance included the

[226] "Amusements – Round Room Rotunda", *Dublin Daily Express,* August 17th, 1899, pg. 4.

projection onto her white dress of "portraits of many popular statesmen" as she spun, offering an innovative technological spectacle that married graceful movement with the resonant imagery of military perseverance[227].

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- Fig. 4.17 - Richard Caton Woodville's *Charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman,* 1898.[228]

In the context of the company's responsivity to current affairs, it is notable that the Dublin programme included a depiction of the Charge of the 21st Lancers at the Battle of Omdurman that took place in September 1898. As Richard Fulton and others have outlined, 1898 and 1899 saw increased interest in the "Sudan sensation" (Fulton, 2009: 37.) The battle was an especially well-visualised moment of the Sudan Campaign, having taken place around eleven months before the Dublin myriorama show. The art historian Peter Harrington

[227] "Poole's Myriorama", *Waterford Standard,* September 20th, 1899, n.p.
[228] Richard Caton Woodville Jr., *Charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman,* 1898, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. [https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-charge-of-the-21st-lancers-at-the-battle-of-omdurman-2-september-1898-97117], accessed September 13th, 2019.

identifies at least four different depictions of the Charge that appeared in weekly illustrated magazines at the time, part of a massive spike of interest in the conflict (Harrington, 1998: 84.) These sketches or illustrations acquired from the battle became the basis for a range of fine art paintings, most significantly by Stanley Berkeley, Edward Hale and Richard Caton Woodville [see Fig. 4.17.] The inclusion of (a version of) Woodville's interpretation in the Poole's programme is a prime example of the company's attention to current events and to the marketability of the latest crazes.

In effect, the centricity of the 21st Lancers in the Cairo to the Cape programme was symptomatic of a burgeoning visual culture that prioritised sensation over measured accounts of the truth. From the perspective of the work-histories of Carl and Gertrude Fredricks, the Poole's material attempted to cultivate a popular patriotism by retelling historical (and current) events from a pro-British position. However, this material had to adapt to a range of geographical scales and community value-systems. Significantly to Dublin, the sensationalism around Sudan had a specifically Irish connection. A report from an Irish officer published in the pro-unionist *Dublin Daily Express* a year before the Fredricks' appearance was extremely disparaging of Omdurman, stating that "the most elementary principles of sanitation are ignored in the town, and at every street corner one lights on heaps of filth and ordure and decaying carcasses of horses and of mules"[229]. The Dublin presses also reminded readers that three Victoria Crosses awarded for valour following Omdurman went to Irishmen.[230] This awareness of Irish contribution to the Sudan campaign may have primed the myriorama audience's response to the Omdurman sequence in the show, demonstrating that

[229] Untitled column, *Dublin Daily Express,* September 29th, 1898, pg. 4.
[230] Untitled column, *Dublin Daily Nation,* February 6th, 1899, pg. 5.

the Poole's pro-imperialist message could have resonances tailored to local audiences, or could at least appeal to local frames of reference.

Despite this deliberate appeal to Irish sentiments, the political leanings of the audiences as well as the venues in which the myrioramas were performed invited a range of possible readings. These either supported or disparaged British activities during both the Sudanese and South African campaigns. The media historian Denis Condon shows that tensions between nationalist and unionist attitudes in the country primed certain responses to the Myriorama's promotion of British imperial rule. He writes that

> the social elite were still largely Protestant at the turn of the century, but outside the north-eastern corner of Ireland – where a large Protestant working-class supported the union with Britain and greeted Boer War pictures with displays of loyalty – the small-farming and urban working and lower-middle-classes were predominantly Catholic and nationalist.
>
> (Condon, 2011: 96)

Another Poole's touring cycle visited the Rotunda in 1901, and Condon cites a critical opinion in the *Dublin Evening Telegraph* that highlighted the overwhelming bias of the myriorama experience during the Boer War:

> of course, the Myriorama was painted for a British audience, who imagine their aggression in the South African Republics has been an

> uninterrupted series of successes […] Yesterday these pictures were not received with unmixed approval.[231]

This variance of reception indicates that as the myriorama depicted hyper-masculine imagery of British heroism and endeavour, such a bold narrative risked being dismissed by sceptical or even actively resistant micro-communities in Ireland. The inclusion on the Dublin bill of an eventograph picture showing the journey of Shamrock was perhaps a means of ameliorating these dissenting attitudes. It at least hints at the care the Poole's tours took in shaping their repertoire for the range of communities they encountered across Britain and Ireland.

CHAS. W. POOLE'S

Latest and Greatest Production.

GREATER BRITAIN! The Cape—Natal—Rhodesia, —Orange Free State—Savage South Africa—The Transvaal—and the

BOER WAR, Johannesburg and the Gold Mines. The Great Trek, Scene on the Crocodile River, Arrival of GENERAL BULLER at the Cape! Arrival of our Transports at Durban, and departure for Ladysmith.

H.M.S. Powerful and the Naval Brigade.

The Royal Irish, King's Royal Rifles, and Dublin Fusiliers at GLENCOE, ELANDSLAAGTE, where the Devons, the Manchester Regiment, and the Dargai Boys sweep all before them. A 14-year-old Bugle Boy of the 5th Lancers shoots three Boers.

Always something new at POOLE'S.

CAIRO TO THE CAPE, via Khartoum and Fashoda! Central Africa and Omdurman. Battle of Omdurman! and Charge of the 21st Lancers.

Hispano-American War. Golden Klondyke.

Poole's Vast Amusement Aggregation, the largest, best, and most costly that has ever toured. Special Engagement at enormous expense of Charles Judge's Performing Cockatoos, Parrots, and Macaws. Miss Louie Love. The Three Cameos, Cordelia, Carl Fredericks, Victor Ritter, Fred Merry, The Three Ogdens, The Two Daniels, John H. Poole.

The latest and best Animated Photographs now before the Public, The EDISON-POOLE EVENTOGRAPHE!

Poole's Quartette Party! Mandolin, Orchestral and Military Bands of Solo Performers. The whole forming the Greatest, Grandest, Best, and most Recherche ever conceived.

Manager.....Mr JAMES SCOTT.

Originator and Owner...CHAS. W. POOLE.

- Fig 4.18 - Bill matter for the Myriorama's stint at the Albert Hall in Swansea, January 1900.[232]

[231] "Poole's Myriorama", *Dublin Evening Telegraph,* August 6th, 1901, pg. 4. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

[232] "Albert Hall Swansea", *South West Daily News,* January 5th, 1900, pg. 1.

This principle of adaptation was evident in the Fredricks' subsequent engagement in Wales during the Spring and Summer of 1900. As the difficult first year of the Boer War continued, the Poole's repertoire in Wales became even more responsive to popular awareness. Given the anxieties about Britain's mixed success in South Africa, this content became somewhat more jingoistic too. The marketing copy that appeared in the *South West Daily News* in January 1900 prior to the company's engagement at the Albert Hall in Swansea adopted the rhetoric of a unified British struggle. They retained the armchair-travelling Cairo to the Cape theme (including the portrayal of Omdurman) but supplemented this with specific operational details, as if letting the audience in on particular intelligence. These included the arrival of General Buller at the Cape and "the Arrival of Our transports at Durban, and departure for Ladysmith."[233]

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- Fig 4.19 - A photograph of the Poole's Myriorama No. 1 company, printed in Abergavenny, c.1900.[234]

[233] "Albert Hall Swansea", *South West Daily News,*January 5th, 1900, pg. 1.

[234] Photograph entitled 'Poole's Myriorama', Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/3/4. Pencilled underneath the original photograph are the names of the various members of the Fredricks family that appear here. Fredricks stands in the second row,

Whilst in Wales, the company not only presented their entertainments to communities at a smaller geographical scale than Dublin but also found an ability to temporarily integrate themselves into them. This is typified by their visit to Abergavenny in May 1900 [see Fig 4.19] and then a week later at nearby Aberdare[235]. During their week-long stay in the former, the company announced a friendly cricket match between members of the company and the Abergavenny locals in aid of the town's children's hospital. The event was accompanied by the myriorama's band with members of their team dressed in comic costume. Following a "most amusing game […] played to a good gate" Charles Poole himself was able to hand over £7 to the charity fund at the match's close.[236] This shows that the company had a capacity to invest in the prosperity of the communities they played to with the resources at their disposal, with a particular interest in the wellbeing and education of children.

According to the town's press, the cricket match was announced from the stage during a show earlier in the week, performatively securing a relation between company and their audience. In this respect, whilst the myriorama entertainment was making bold claims about British influence on the course of global history though the moving pictures, the format was flexible enough for the show to utilise direct audience address, or more specifically, direct *community* address. Their appearance at Aberdare, home to approximately 40,000 people in 1900 and the site of a burgeoning steam coal industry, also deployed this strategy in the light

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second from the right. The girl seated in the third row, to the right of the man in the centre with the top hat, is Della Fredricks, sat on the lap of her mother Gertrude (or 'Gert'.) The boy sat below them is marked as 'Tom', a pet name for the eldest son Arthur. Census records from 1901 indicate that the two children accompanied their parents on the Poole's nationwide tour. The man seated on the first left of the third row is company owner Charles W Poole. Whilst there is nothing to suggest this photograph was actually taken in Abergavenny (only that it was printed there) it is supported by the date supplied in A/ATH/34/4/5 indicating that the company toured to the town in May 1900.

[235] Volume entitled 'Addresses', c. 1907, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/5.

[236] "Aid for the Cottage Hospital", *Abergavenny Chronicle*, May 11th, 1900, pg. 5.

of ongoing developments in South Africa. On the evening of May 17th, as was the case in theatres and music halls across the country, the myriorama show was stopped midway through to announce the relief of Mafeking, bringing a frustrating seven-month struggle for the British military to a conclusion. The report in the *South West Daily News* emphasised the joyful patriotism that the announcement set in motion, noting the way in which the entertainments became closely intertwined with Aberdare's civic space:

> The welcome news […] was quickly made known to the inhabitants, and thousands of people congregated in the square. […] Meanwhile the news became known at Poole's Myriorama, and the audience rose as one man, giving three cheers for Baden-Powell and singing "Soldiers of the Queen". The limelight lantern was quickly removed from the stage and put to play on the street, and several war pictures were exhibited on a temporary screen placed on the opposite side of the street.[237]

With an ethic of 'up-to-dateness' typical of their entertainments, the No. 1 Myriorama tour literally dissolved the boundaries between their productions and their audiences. In this example, the company went so far as to directly forge a shared identity with the local community as a core part of their proceedings. In response to a significant moment in the course of the Boer War, this common identity became particularly pronounced through an ad-hoc piece of street cinema, where the scenes from South Africa could be packed up, taken from the interior theatre space and projected on the wall of the town high street. In both examples,

[237] "Aberdare", *Cardiff Times and South Wales Weekly News,* May 26th, 1900, pg 6.

the Myriorama utilised their resources not to create a hermetic imaginative world that merely dictated a pro-British narrative under the pretence of 'amusement with instruction', but to actively build consensus around the imperial project through a two-way community dialogue.

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- Fig 4.20 – Carl Fredricks as a lecturer or 'Guide' for the Boer War Myriorama, c.1902.[238]

[238] Bundle of photographs of members of the Fredricks family, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/5/2. The photograph is backed with handwriting in pencil "Lecturing Boer War".

The Myriorama's conscious adaptation to community interests and up-to-the-minute current affairs had implications for performance style, particularly for Carl Fredricks. The expression of British success at Omdurman through the Poole's visually arresting pictorial spectacles in their Myrioramas draws an interesting parallel with Fredricks' formative training as a salesman. During parts of his stint with Poole's, he was entrusted with the role of Guide, effectively a master-of ceremonies of sorts[239]. Later on, an *Era* correspondent described him as "interesting and amusing guide and vocalist" after a performance at the Agricultural Hall in Norwich in October 1903[240]. As a deliberate wordplay on 'tour guide', the role functioned as a mediator between the on-stage worlds and its audiences, or between the imaginary territories presented in the entertainments and those that 'explored' them. To use Hudson John Powell's history of the Poole's Myriorama as a cross-reference, the Genial Guide required strong vocal skills, a convincing display of 'factual' knowledge and even the ability to improvise during technical faults. The latter was apparently a common occurrence, Powell argues, and was in fact considered a key part of the myriorama's charm (Powell, 2002: 135-136.) The Guide was typically an ebullient male figure dressed smartly in a jacket and white gloves who gave the impression of an experienced, authoritative traveller. Occasionally, this pivotal role in the proceedings would be adapted to suit a specific programme and was signified through deliberate change in manner or costume. During his stint with Poole's, Fredricks would characterise the Guide as a Boer War soldier [see Fig 4.20] or the portly figure

[239] "Poole's Myriorama", *Jersey Weekly Press and Independent*, September 13th, 1902, pg. 4.
[240] "Norwich – Agricultural Hall Assembly Room", *The Era,* October 10th, 1903, pg. 26.

of John Bull accompanied by a Britannia. He was subsequently known in some of his professional cards as the "Ventriloquial John Bull"[241].

These symbolic personifications were drawn on in service of consensus-building, or to put it in commercial terms, as a way of 'selling' a mythic British identity and directing audiences towards a singular point of view about the imperial project. This is particularly relevant to the principle of cross-community adaptation. As we have seen, the Poole's companies consistently updated their repertoire and stock of paintings in line with evolving current events. The Guide would surely have required to be attuned to these developments and would perhaps have been prompted to tailor his patter to local attitudes and references. With his refined masculine appearance to include neat grooming and adoption of the dinner jacket (or a military uniform) Fredricks could draw on his experience as a salesman and make a 'pitch' to audiences about Britain's overwhelming success not just during the Boer War but also as a consequence of its colonising endeavours throughout the world. This rhetorical strategy of selective history in performance is particularly interesting when we note that by the time Fredricks was engaged with the Poole's Myriorama, there is no evidence to suggest that he had ever actually left Britain himself.

This section has approached the question of on and off-stage masculinities in terms of adaptation and authenticity, analysing how the Poole's constantly evolving repertoire in the light of developing current affairs squared with the needs of different micro-communities in Ireland and Wales. This had inevitable implications for the Fredricks' professional conduct. However, during this time, Carl and Gertrude also had to maintain a family unit as well as

[241] "Fredricks Carl, The Ventriloquial John Bull; Cordelia, the Japanese Mahatma", *The Era,* November 23rd, 1901, pg. 33.

their own marriage, with the logistics of the touring experience presenting certain challenges to secure middle-class domesticity. In the final section of this chapter, I will stay with the Poole's Myriorama phase to explore the Fredricks' living arrangements during this time, where the close family unit was suspended during the birth of a third child. Here I offer the term 'portable domesticity' to describe the itinerant family experience and the gender relations within it.

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- Fig. 4.21 - Carl Fredricks with wife Gertrude and daughter Della, possibly performing as the Ya Pynkito family, date unknown.[242]

[242] Bundle of unidentified photographs of theatre performances and groups of the actors, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/3/2.

1899-c.1904 Part Two: Portable Domesticity

In *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian Britain*, John Tosh convincingly suggests that 'domesticity'

> denotes not just a pattern of residence or a web of obligations, but a profound attachment: a state of mind as well as a physical orientation. Its defining attributes are privacy and comfort, separation from the workplace, and the merging of domestic space and family members into a single commanding concept (in English, 'home'.)
>
> (Tosh, 1999: 4)

Though the photographic evidence of Fredricks and his family suggest a close bond [see Fig 4.21] we can only make tentative claims about their precise emotional attachments with each other. Whilst letters and diaries are the basis of Tosh's methodology, no such sources exist for the Fredricks. However, other sources can help to make sense of how the family might have adapted themselves and their self-concept of 'home' to life on the road. For example, by drawing on administrative materials such as censuses and newspaper columns, it can be determined that the family had several temporary sleeping arrangements during the Poole years (and beyond) and that these had practical implications for their upkeep of domesticity. How these itinerant sleeping arrangements might have squared with the disciplinary construct of the Victorian family would have surely depended on the quality of the lodgings, particularly in terms of space, provision of beds and cleanliness. Medical historian Tom Crook's analysis contextualises the civilizing strategies behind the spatialization of sleep in Victorian Britain, writing that

> the ordering of sleep was a key means through which this self-consciously civilizing society confronted some of its manifold discontents. By the end of the period, sleeping space was very much what it is today: a space at once privatized, medicalised and psychologised.
>
> (Crook, 2008: 16)

As Tosh suggests "domestic circumstances were the most visible and reliable guide to a man's level of income (and thus his success in work), as well as being a mirror of his moral character" (Tosh, 1999: 24.) It is therefore appropriate to chart how Fredricks' overlapping personas as professional, father and husband might have measured against those ideals of domestic masculinity. This is especially so when we consider that his family's shelter and comfort during their extended periods of touring would primarily have relied on the help of others.

Journalistic commentary on the conditions of theatrical lodgings tended to emphasise two challenging aspects of the experience. Firstly, securing arrangements in the first place was characteristically improvisational, and secondly, there were concerns about the spatial constraints of certain apartments and their varying levels of cleanliness. The touring repertory actor J. Egerton Hubbard lamented the painstaking process involved in identifying and securing suitable sleeping arrangements in a letter to the *Era* in 1901:

> the method of procedure [in identifying lodgings] is simple but tiring. A list of addresses is obtained either from some more fortunate member of the company who knows the town or, failing that, from anyone who can be found to volunteer the necessary information, and there follows

> a walk around that town inquiring at various houses until satisfactory lodging is obtained. […] with luck, the rooms are settled, terms arranged – as a rule, far too high for the accommodation provided – and then comes the final weary tramp back to the station for the luggage, and the actor's troubles are finished for the time being.

In the same letter, Hubbard also mentioned the unsanitary conditions that actors would occasionally come across:

> too often the bath, if it exists – which, by the way, is the exception rather than the rule in the ordinary theatrical lodging – is full of boots, blankets, books, plants, ferns – anything, in fact, except the necessary water.[243]

Though the letter is written in an expressive style, Hubbard concludes with a call to establish dedicated 'actors' hotels' in prominent theatrical destinations around the country to help alleviate the stress and discomfort experienced by touring companies.

[243] Egerton Hubbard, J, ""An Actor's Hotel" – To the Editor of the Era", *The ERA,* October 5th 1901, pg. 13.

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- Fig. 4.22 - Small advertisement for *Kirkley's Directory of Theatrical Apartments*, published in *The Stage*.[244]

Whilst there is little evidence that such a network was established at quite the level of formalisation that Hubbard had hoped for, specialist initiatives were set up to compile and distribute satisfactory lodging situations for touring performers. These included the publication of directories. "A List of Theatrical Apartments in the United Kingdom", a pocket guide costing sixpence and edited by John Dunbar, was published in 1900 containing "Upwards of 500 Reliable Addresses" to offer appropriate and well-referenced lodging for theatrical professionals[245]. *Kirkley's Directory of Theatrical Apartments*, published in the key entertainment periodicals with the tagline "A Boon to the Traveller"[246], provided even greater coverage. Its ninth edition published in 1905 had "grown to a portly volume of one hundred and sixty-four pages"[247] and was circulated "among Professionals in every Theatre Town in the British Isles"[248]. Additionally, privately-owned lodging-houses were occasionally tailored

[244] "Kirkley's Directory", *The Stage,* October 24th, 1901, pg. 11.
[245] "A List of Theatrical Apartments in the United Kingdom", *The Stage,* May 10th, 1900, pg. 22.
[246] "A Boon to the Traveller – Kirkley's Directory", *Music Hall and Theatre Review,* March 24th, 1905, pg. 7.
[247] Untitled column, *Music Hall and Theatre Review,* July 14th, 1905, pg. 28
[248] *The Stage,* October 24th 1901.

to the theatrical profession and were advertised on the classified pages of local newspapers. 67 St Michael's Hill in the centre of Bristol, for example, was pitched as suitable for "family or theatrical lodgings" and was in close proximity to the tram service, ideal for the theatres and music halls in the city centre.[249] Column inches in both *The Era* and *The Stage* were dedicated to listing "Professional Apartments" in locations across the country. Some private landlords or landladies would emphasise ownership of a piano, a particularly attractive feature during pantomime season[250].

Given the extent of their provincial touring, it is likely that Fredricks and his family would have been subject to this precarious network of accommodation, and perhaps would have benefitted from the active efforts to improve touring conditions around 1900. The Fredricks address book includes a series of addresses where the family stayed during the Poole's tour and beyond, including a mix of private residences and taverns as well as a chronological list of the venues themselves[251]. It is unclear whether Fredricks himself arranged these lodgings or whether this was done on the family's behalf by the Poole's team of advance agents. Even so, the quick turnaround between locations – during July and August 1900, the Myriorama travelled to no fewer than ten different Welsh towns, including Brynmawr and the coastal towns of Port Talbot and Barry[252] - suggests that the young family could not stay settled for very long, forcing them to reproduce anew a semblance of domesticity. Additionally, they may have been subject to difficulty in identifying sufficient arrangements

[249] "Houses, Villas &c To Let", *Western Daily Press,* October 8th 1901, pg. 3.
[250] "EXETER: Mrs E Smith, Longbrook House, Longbrook St. Sit,, Dining Rooms, Bed and Comb. Rooms; pianos, 3 doors Theatre" *The Stage,* September 10th, 1903, pg. 22.
[251] Volume entitled 'Addresses', c. 1907, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/5.
[252] Ibid.

for four people when travelling between a range of geographical scales, with smaller towns potentially offering less options for family groups in search of week-long stays.

These practical challenges are exemplified by their tour through Scotland in the first months of 1901. The family are listed in the 1901 census as 'boarding' at 10 Lochrin Place, Edinburgh with the Hastie family, including a coachman, his wife, their two sons and Louisa Poole, a 'Vocalist' attached to the No. 1 Myriorama tour ('Carl Fredricks', 1901) This was during the company's stay in Edinburgh where they were engaged for four weeks at Cooke's Circus on East Fountainbridge, within easy walking distance of the property[253]. The street was predominantly made up of "tenement dwelling-houses" and was close to the main city centre, with 453 occupants spread across eighteen addresses. A month before the Fredricks family arrived in the city, the No. 10 tenement block was up for 'public roup' (auction) suggesting that the property was in the hands of a remote landlord. It was described in a local 'For Sale' column as having been recently built[254]. There were nine separate living spaces at 10 Lochrin Place, each housing between four and nine occupants. In total, there were forty-seven people at the address at the time of the census taking.

These records reveal a comprehensive range of personal relationships, occupations and residential statuses at the address. Apart from the Fredricks family, there were seven other boarders residing in the building, all of whom were young professional men aged between seventeen and twenty-three. There were numerous young families, including an Italian family that ran a ladies' tailor-cutting business and kept a fifteen-year-old in-house servant. The eldest resident at the property was an eighty-year-old female annuitant living

[253] "Amusements", *Edinburgh Evening News,* March 30th, 1901, pg. 1.
[254] "Lochrin Place, No. 10", *The Scotsman,* February 16th, 1901, pg. 3.

with a family of six and two male lodgers. As historian Vicky Holmes has noted, this was a common category of lower-middle-class boarder in tenement dwelling-houses (Holmes, 2014: 319.) Alongside Della and Arthur, there were five other children under fourteen at the property and plenty of others nearby to stave off boredom, perhaps just as well when their parents were performing six nights a week with Wednesday and Saturday matinees on top[255]. There were almost no other people involved in the entertainment industry at the property or indeed on the entire street, the notable exception being the American proprietor of Cooke's Circus John Henry Cooke who lived with his family at 1 Lochrin Place.

This mixed demographic reflects general patterns in theatrical lodgings in two ways. Firstly, in contrast to the formalisation offered by Kirkley's directory and the calls for change from prominent repertory actors, 10 Lochrin Place does not immediately appear to have been reserved specifically for the theatrical profession. It would be almost impossible to determine the exact method undertaken to secure these arrangements, but the Fredricks' affiliation to a national entertainment circuit may have made their efforts a little less laborious. Whilst the company's employment of advance-agents and window-billers was primarily in the interest of advertising for their entertainments, their positioning a couple of steps ahead of the company itself may have presented an opportunity to scope out potential boarding arrangements in each town (Powell, 2002: 126-137.) Secondly, the brief integration of the Fredricks family into a micro-community of men and women from a range of learned trades or occupations might be indicative of the increased professionalisation of the entertainment industry. In turn, this might indicate its growing respectability in middle-class circles. This is borne out through mentions of the address in letting columns published in the two years

[255] *Edinburgh Evening News,* March 30th, 1901.

before the Fredricks' stay. One printed in *The Scotsman* two weeks before the Myriorama opened read very briefly "APARTMENTS – Piano, bath; central. 10 Lochrin Place, second flat, left bell"[256]. As explored above, the provision of a piano may have been an attractive proposition for a theatrical family, particularly one that specialised in popular and often musical fare. On the one hand, this option of accommodation was certainly not luxurious for the Fredricks family simply due to the intimate conditions of the tenement building. The precise number of rooms and beds in the Hastie residence are unclear and were not recorded as part of the 1901 census, but nine people in a single apartment of a four-floor tenement building may have been a little too close for (total) comfort. However, this was far from a desperate situation for a four-week stay in the city. Whilst little can be determined about whether there were boots and plants in the bath, the middle-class trappings of a piano and washing facilities available in the building may have at least offered a semblance of creature comforts for an itinerant family.

As the four-week stint in Edinburgh demonstrates, the touring life involved a necessary suspension of Victorian middle-class domesticity and its organisation of gender roles. John Tosh observes that "keeping order in the home was such a critical component" of middle-class masculinity, noting that "the man who was not master in his own house courted the scorn of his male associates, as well as economic ruin and uncertain paternity" (Tosh, 1999: 3.) The family's listing as 'boarders' in the 1901 census suggests that not only were the Hasties providing them with shelter and bed, but also other services such as meal provision and laundry. How does a male head of the family negotiate that masculine ideal of domesticity

[256] "Lochrin Place", *The Scotsman,* February 27th, 1901, pg. 4.

when boarding in another family's property, even if only temporarily? It is notable that from their marriage in 1892 to the beginning of the Myriorama tour, Carl and Gertrude had not yet owned their own home. As records of the birth of third child Leo demonstrate, their 'home' in the material, architectural sense – 24 Morford Street in Bath - was occupied by another young family alongside Carl's father, George, who at the age of seventy-six was listed as a 'lodger' in the census ('George Pinkett', 1901.)

The persistent switching between sleeping arrangements represented practical difficulties for all members of the family, and not merely in terms of adequate sleep or comfort. Whilst not immediately possible to determine, the provision of education for Della, Arthur and other children travelling with the Poole's circuit would have been somewhat compromised. As their parents would have been legally obliged to provide them with some form of schooling in line with the Education Act of 1870, a possible explanation is that the Poole's had a hired tutor. However, there is no evidence such an arrangement was provided. More decisively, in her dual role as a theatre professional and mother, the touring life may have afforded Gertrude a particular social identity, especially alongside discourses of domesticity. In her detailed study *Actresses as Working Women* Tracy Davis summarises the potential conflict between touring managers and women's desire to start families, writing that

> [Actresses] could exercise some choice over whether to try to integrate reproduction and family life with a career. Yet there were consequences. The adjunct of a family made a woman an awkward employee, and the system was not kind to encumbered persons whether they sought eminence or just a living.

(Davis, 1991: 52-53)

Davis moves on to read this dilemma through the additional contextual factor of class:

> For actresses events such as conception, gestation, the timing of parturition, nursing and child-rearing – so easily accommodated by leisured middle-class women with servants and by husbands who regard their only important realm as the public sphere – were necessarily momentous obstacles to integrate with a theatrical career.
>
> (Davis, 1991: 55)

This question of timing and reconciliation with a burgeoning on-stage career is relevant to the life course of the Fredricks family. Gertrude became pregnant with her third child during the Northern Ireland and Scotland leg of the Myriorama tour, based on a birth date of September 6th 1901 ('Leo Frederick Pinkett', 1901.) This would have included a sea crossing from Belfast to Greenock, noted in the address book as a "very bad passage", hardly conducive to the early stages of pregnancy[257]. As Davis points out, this would surely have had some impact on her ability to perform as a dancer and to comfortably engage in persistent travelling, particularly during their long stay in Edinburgh.

Gertrude's career suspension for the birth of her third child marked an important – and precarious – phase for the Fredricks, with notable effects on their self-presentation as a coherent family unit. There are two crucial sources for this moment: the address book, and Leo's registration of birth, each of which when matched to secondary newspaper accounts provide an insight into their circumstances during this time. Following a further two months

[257] Volume entitled 'Addresses', c. 1907, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/5.

of touring to smaller halls in Scotland including in Perth[258] and Coatbridge[259], the address book marks that on July 12th 1901 "Charly and Family [came] home to Bath"[260], just under two months before Leo's birth. Despite the characteristically insecure nature of theatrical touring and accommodation, the Fredricks family did at least have recourse to family connections back home in Bath, even if 24 Morford Street was somewhat crowded and potentially not private. Having children whilst on the road must have been a less risky decision with that extra level of insurance; indeed, the fact that a continuously updated address book exists at all suggests a sustained level of remote family support.

Whilst birth registrations tend to be brief and matter-of-fact, Leo's reveals a key practical detail to show how the family adapted to their new circumstances. The certificate implies that Carl was not present during the birth: this is supported by an entry in the address book and by other newspaper accounts. As various historians on domesticity have pointed out, expectant fathers in the Victorian period were often limited to the role of nervous bystander during childbirth, though John Tosh and Vicky Holmes both claim that such an event offered an opportunity for an active display of successful paternity either in the form of comfort provision for his wife (Holmes, 2017: 41-43) or as a demonstration to peers of the continuation of the family name (Tosh, 1999: 82.) The birth of Leo, however, appears to be a display of paternal absence. Autobiographical and anecdotal evidence compiled by historian Julie-Marie Strange indicates that the father's absence from the scene of childbirth was more common for families of lower economic classes in this period (Strange, 2015: 167-169.) In turn, the demands of a travelling or otherwise precarious profession appeared to have a potential

[258] "Poole's Myriorama – War Raging in Perth", *Perthshire Advertiser,* May 1st, 1901, pg. 1.
[259] "Theatre Royal", *Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser,* June 8th 1901, pg. 5.
[260] Volume entitled 'Addresses', c. 1907, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/5.

impact on such key family milestones. After their return to Bath, Carl would leave again to take up a brief summer engagement at Lytham St Anne[261] presumably to sustain the family income. He published in the Wanted column of *The Era* in August 1901 to thank famed concert party manager Fred Carlton for a "Comfortable Engagement and Handsome Presentation on occasion of Benefit"[262]. The continuation of the address book through September appears to indicate that Carl was not present in Bath at the time of the birth. He had rejoined the Royal Myriorama at Southport at the beginning of August[263] and was performing at the Town Hall in Derby two days after Leo was born[264].

Whilst clearly out of financial necessity, Fredricks was able to continue his professional activities as he became a father for the third time, and the documentation shows that he sustained his dual public appearances as a refined entertainer and as a labouring family man. What is interesting to track is that despite the brief suspension of her career Gertrude's dual identity as a professional and as a mother was complementary of - and not in opposition to - her husband's activities. Perhaps in contrast to the managerial awkwardness and career risk that Davis suggests, Gertrude not only recommenced employment with the Poole's a matter of weeks later but appeared to have herself become an integral part of the entertainments. During the company's four-week stay in Jersey, a local reporter reserved special attention for the Fredricks:

> This excellent combination opened its second week in Jersey last Monday, the Oddfellows' Hall being again well filled. Mr Carl

[261] Volume entitled 'Addresses', c. 1907, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/5.
[262] "Miscellaneous – Wanted Known", *The Era,* August 10th 1901, pg. 27.
[263] Volume entitled 'Addresses', c. 1907, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/4/5.
[264] "Drill Hall Derby", *Derbyshire Advertiser and Journal,* September 7th, 1901, pg. 8.

> Fredricks conducted the tour as usual […] Especially notable, amongst the other turns, is Cordelia's luminous dance, which is certainly the best of its kind ever witnessed in Jersey. It is nightly received with rounds of applause…[265]

This demonstrates that there was no essential barrier for women under the employment of the Poole's to suspend their engagement and start families. Though it appears unlikely that she would have received a form of compensation from the company during the maternity period – the need for Carl to continue working and the customary 'no play, no pay' rule suggests a level of financial compromise during the pregnancy – there is nothing to suggest that the Poole's management would have looked on her decision unfavourably. This is supported by Gertrude's souvenir photograph, dated January 1902 but presumably taken and printed in Northwich whilst the Myriorama was visiting the town [see Fig 4.16.] The address book gave a date of November 24th, 1901, and the *Era* published a "Wanted Known" notice during the same week that read

> FREDRICKS, CARL. the Ventriloquial John Bull; CORDELIA, the Japanese Mahatma. Poole's Myriorama, New Central Theatre, Northwich.[266]

Though the records do not indicate whether the three children went back out on tour with Carl and Gertrude by the winter of 1901 – or indeed what the arrangements were for the care of their new-born son - these pieces of evidence nevertheless indicate that Gertrude's

[265] "Poole's Myriorama", *Jersey Weekly Press and Independent,* September 13th, 1902, pg. 4.
[266] "Fredricks Carl, The Ventriloquial John Bull; Cordelia, the Japanese Mahatma", *The Era,* November 23rd, 1901, pg. 33.

resumption of her stage career was within weeks of her son's birth. Whether or not "the Japanese Mahatma" was an act that required the same level of intensive physicality as the Kaleidoscopic Dancer is uncertain. However, it does suggest that Gertrude was ready, albeit perhaps through financial necessity, to engage once more in the persistent emotional and physical labours of the touring experience, and seemingly quite soon after her pregnancy.

With their lodging arrangements and the circumstances around parturition having significant impact on their personal and professional lives, it remains to be determined how Carl and Gertrude sustained a version of middle-class domesticity in the course of the Myriorama tour, if indeed they could at all. Their continuous engagement with professional networks during this period, including through publications such as *The Era,* offer a clue as to their companionate self-presentation. Around Christmas and New Year in both 1899 and 1901, the couple posted "Wanted Known" notices in *The Era* to update prospective employers on their current engagement and to offer season's greetings:

> FREDRICKS, CARL, and CORDELIA, Two Sound Successes, C.W. Poole's No. 1 Myriorama, Albert Hall, Swansea. A Happy New Year to All.[267]

A similar message was published during the Myriorama's tour of Yorkshire towns at the end of 1901:

> FREDRICKS, CARL, the Ventriloquial John Bull and CORDELIA, Danseuse. A Merry Christmas to All. Public Hall, Halifax.[268]

[267] "Fredricks, Carl and Cordelia," *The Era,* December 30th, 1899, pg. 34.
[268] "Fredricks, Carl", *The Era,* December 21st, 1901, pg. 32.

What is significant about these notices is that they presented themselves to the industry as a husband and wife pair, albeit under their stage personas. Whether this was a common avenue of publicity for married couples working together in the entertainment industry is difficult to determine without a sustained analysis of this kind of practice. However, what these festive messages appear to express is that Fredricks' relationship with his wife appears not to have been one of top-down authority typical of the distant stereotype of the Victorian family man, a narrative that John Tosh (1999) and Julie-Marie Strange (2015) have each challenged. Instead, the available evidence suggests a companionate dynamic built on mutual professional support, shared cultural interests in performing and travelling, and above all love and affection. This is notable when the ability to successfully shift between public and private spheres was still largely a male preserve. It is a testament to Gertrude's talent that she was able to be a reputed performer in her own right as well as a dedicated mother, even when her career was interrupted by the birth of her second son (and two more sons in 1905 and 1914 respectively.) [see Fig 4.23]

Importantly to my overall focus on local identity, although the Fredricks spent much of the period in question here travelling the country, they maintained their connection to Bath and the wider South West through close familial relationships and frequent performance in the region. This included an engagement at the Grand Pier in Weston-super-Mare in the summer of 1905 where Fredricks, in true up-to-date and adaptational style, performed a sketch called "A Somersetshire Publican" to a knowing local audience, supported by his now teenage daughter Della[269]. The family would eventually settle back in the town where they

[269] "Weston-Super-Mare Grand Pier and Pavilion", *Weston Super Mare Gazette,* May 20th 1905, pg. 7.

would become regular fixtures at the Knightstone Theatre, right up until Carl's death in 1926 at the age of 59[270].

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- Fig. 4.23 – The Fredricks children – Arthur, Leo, Della and Jim, c.1907.[271]

[270] "Mr Carlton Fredricks – Inquest on Well-Known Theatrical Manager – Collapse in His Office", *Bath Chronicle,* December 4th, 1926, pg. 19.

[271] Bundle of photographs of members of the Fredricks family, Somerset Archives and Local Studies, A/ATH/34/5/2.

Did a life in touring entertainment offer an avenue through which to suspend 'conventional' middle-class masculinity, bound up in its compelling though confining images of secure work, home and family? Or did the networks of support available to Fredricks along with his patriotic on-stage personas suggest an upholding of hegemonic power? I argue that this life-course approach to Fredricks that has knit together official state records, journalistic accounts and visual evidence disrupts a straightforward hegemonic model to begin with, and that therefore both statements could be considered true. To return to Connell's groupings outlined in the Introduction to the study, Fredricks occupied at least two of the ontological positions in relation to 'hegemonic masculinity' and in some cases even did so simultaneously. His decision to abandon a life of regular employment and the prospect of a secure domestic arrangement to embark on a career in entertainment suggests a shift from 'complicit' masculinity to a more 'subordinate' position, characterised by short-term employment contracts whose unfavourable terms were primarily designed to protect a manager's profits. However, particularly with his "Ventriloquial John Bull" character presented as part of the Poole's Myriorama, his on-stage representations were very much in support of the message of British colonialism and imperial strength, implying a representational complicity that belied the off-stage insecurities of a touring life.

Following Ben Griffin's proposal of a new historiographical method in analysing masculinities of the past, the evidence presented here demonstrates the range of mechanisms through which masculine identity may have been secured, with different spheres of social practice (that Griffin usefully refers to as "communication communities") requiring variegated performances of manliness (Griffin, 2018: 9.) The small comment in the address book in the weeks before Leo's birth – "Charly and Family come home to Bath" - nicely

captures a quick shift between the professional and personal realm. The most likely author of the book is Carl's father George, whose reference to his son as 'Charlie' instead of 'Carl' or 'Carlton' shows the clear demarcation between the role of a professional entertainer and the role of a dedicated family man. It highlights how these two personas were at once separate yet still constituent parts of Fredricks' overall presentation as a self-sufficient middle-class man. The life and career of Fredricks over the two decades or so covered here shows that masculinity was (and arguably still is) subject to portability. The surviving documentation reveals a man persistently moving between different on-stage representations and off-stage social practices, to the point where the two domains were co-extensive of each other. He moved between his role as 'refined entertainer' or worldly lecturer on stage to his role as a committed father once the lights had gone down, via a self-determined, self-promoting business persona in those gaps in between.

What this chapter has also attempted to achieve is a diachronic reading of a man's identity as it developed over the life course, from a naïve teenage worker for the Midland Railway to Fredricks' mature self-presentation as an established entertainment professional and family man. At each point in his adult life he was implicated in middle-class configurations of masculinity and his social behaviours were in persistent dialogue with accepted norms, often outwardly conforming to them both on and off the stage, even in challenging circumstances. However, there is a notable and perhaps crucial gap in his life-history. Aside from his early living arrangements in the affluent environment of central Bath, virtually nothing else can be determined about Fredricks' boyhood and therefore whether the early years of his life had any specific impact on his professional or emotional development. As the next chapter will show, boys were subject to intense scrutiny from scientific and

sociological discourses during the period, especially pronounced given anxieties about the future of the British Empire and the influences of a burgeoning popular culture. The early years of male lives in the South West was often a phase of sharp gender regulation and was thus crucial to the foundation of future masculine identities. The final chapter therefore focusses on an almost entirely neglected aspect of live cultural practices in the late Victorian and Edwardian era: that is, the stage lives of boys.

FIVE

Regulatory Anxiety and The Precocious Labour of Boys in Public Displays

- Fig 5.1 - Untitled photograph of two boys boxing at a fair or fete, with a crowd watching, c.1910.[272]

"Boys will be Boys" – "True", said the first boy, But the second, at a distance, shouted, "Not true of me, because I'm a little farther."

- Joke from *Punch* reprinted in the *Shepton Mallet Journal*, 1899[273]

*

A truism haunts the histories and politics of British masculinities: "boys will be boys." The phrase implies a set of practices that are assumed to be representative of average male

[272] Boxing Match, early 1910s, Vaughan Collection, Bristol Archives, 43207/22/20/29.

[273] "Cuttings from the Comics", *Shepton Mallet Journal,* August 18th, 1899, pg. 3.

behaviour, giving the illusion of a hardwired 'nature'. In turn, this reproduces the stereotype of boys as mischief-makers, competitors and territory-conquerors equipped with a limited emotional range. These "masculine presuppositions" (Corbett, 2009: 87) recurred across numerous late Victorian and Edwardian discourses. The English doctor Joseph Mortimer Granville, a born Devonian that practised as a surgeon in Bristol in the mid-nineteenth century (Kneale, 2014: 125) dedicated two chapters of his parenting manual *Youth: Its Care and Culture* (1880) to the raising of boys and young men. In these passages, he spoke of an essential "boy-mind" or "boy-nature" that was predisposed towards self-sufficiency and emotional restraint:

> boys are usually less communicative with their associates – even those of their own age and like feeling and pursuits – than girls are […]
>
> nothing is more uncongenial to the spirit and temperament of early manhood than any feeling of dependence or patronage. In the rare instance, when strong personal friendship breaks down the barrier which the mind of a boy erects around himself […] there is a part of his nature held in reserve.
>
> (Mortimer-Granville, 1880: 36-37)

True to these cultural tropes, the phrase "boys will be boys" made numerous appearances in the South West presses in the years around 1900 and was deployed to suit a range of purposes. It was invoked in advertising, such as that of a Falmouth bootmaker's who ran the headline "Strong Boots for Rough Boys", adopting the appealing mythology of boisterous activity as a core element of their marketing strategy. "Boys will be Boys", they

declared, "and some Boys are terrors for Boots"[274]. The maxim was frequently cited in local petty court sessions, suggesting that some mitigation was made for boys who were merely expressing their 'natural' inclinations towards aggression and honour-seeking. This is exemplified by an incident in Exeter where two youths had a bare-knuckle fight following a disagreement over a cricket match, a spectacle watched by an estimated three hundred people in the city's respectable Belmont Pleasure Grounds in the summer of 1904. Such was the belief of the Exeter police court in the characteristic aggression of teenage boys, the two lads got off with a warning, despite one of them being considerably "bruised about the face". Sure enough, the report on the incident begins ""Boys will be boys""[275]. The phrase was also used in conversations around reading as a leisure activity, with writers and publishers constructing their ideal audiences on strictly gendered lines. The *Western Daily Press* commented that the 1899 *Boy's Own Annual* was "acting on the somewhat old-fashioned but most reliable motto that "boys will be boys"" and that "the editors of the B.O.P. have achieved another truism – that boys will read the Boy's Own Paper"[276]. With the magazine's eclectic content including adventure stories, travel writing and sporting literature that were pitched towards a notional male imagination (Penner, 2016: 2) the B.O.P was part of an extensive youth print culture that sought to promote healthy (and crucially 'natural') masculinity to its readers.

What the essentialist language adopted by local businesses, judiciaries and print media demonstrate is an attempt to consolidate perceived norms of young masculinity that built social relations and guided representational practice. The question here is whether this

[274] "Strong Boots for Rough Boys – G.B Johns and Son", *Lake's Falmouth Packet and Cornwall Advertiser,* March 19th, 1909, pg. 1.
[275] ""A Pitched Battle" – Three Rounds at Belmont Pleasure Ground", *Western Times,* June 4th, 1904, pg. 4.
[276] "Literature – The Boy's Own Annual", *Western Daily Press,* December 28th, 1899, pg. 2.

language and set of attitudes around 'boy-ness' were also expressed in theatrical circles, or indeed more broadly through the organisation of the various community-directed public displays so common in the turn-of-the-century South West. More precisely, in line with the overall aims of the thesis, my interest in this chapter is in interrogating how live cultural practices advocated "constructed certitudes" about maleness and how certain regulatory techniques shaped boys' bodies and behaviours on and off the stage. The documentation drawn on this chapter, including theatre journals, reviews, pictorial material and administrative records, indicates that boys were subject to predisposed readings on stage that reserved special praise for their representations of masculine virtues, such as discipline, self-enterprise and sense of morality. In turn, as with each of the four previous case studies discussed here, the stage lives of boys were haunted by the prospect of failure, ambiguity and - perhaps most gravely at a time of existential crisis for the British Empire - effeminacy. Their performances were guided by what Ken Corbett calls the "binary force" of gender complementarity: "boys will be boys by not being girls", he writes (Corbett, 2009: 91.) As was the case with the amateur sport practices explored in Chapter One, the need for boys and young men to actively separate from feminised origin was a persistent refrain in British culture, from the sporting field to literary products via other artistic representations, including on the stage.

Given its characterisation in Western culture as a passionate, emotion-led space, the theatre has typically had a complex relationship with this process of 'masculinising' than other cultural modes. This has inspired a small yet fruitful body of work in theatre and performance research that attempts to unpick the stereotypes of the stage as a feminised, even effeminate, cultural terrain. Nadine Holdsworth, for instance, has explored recent arts projects

that invited the participation of boys and young men in dance, challenging a cultural practice "where gender-normative ideologies remain persistent" (Holdsworth, 2013: 169.) Taking an autobiographical tack, Mick Mangan comments on the real-yet-not-real status of the theatrical stage during his school days and the perceived threats to a coherent masculine self that this uncertainty presented:

> boys who took part in school drama were not necessarily designated 'cissies': nonetheless, it was generally accepted that they had chosen a less honourable, a less manly path than their friends in the first XV. […] Dressing-up, putting on make-up, showing off, displaying the body, pretending to be someone else, ostending emotion, the occasional ironized cross-gendering of performance […] courted the danger of appearing to disavow the codes of "masculine authenticity."
>
> (Mangan, 2002: 4)

The 'ostending of emotion' that Mangan describes is contrasted with the 'authentically masculine' codes of the school rugby team, an activity that typically prioritises reason and strategy as opposed to the 'softer' imaginative realms conventionally presented on theatre stages. Applying this principle to the late Victorian and Edwardian era, there was an expression of anxiety about the practice of boys cross-dressing on stage as this was seen to court threats to their masculine 'authenticity', and perhaps aversely influence their off-stage behaviours. Anne Varty writes that

> during the Victorian era there was widespread belief that actors internalised the customs and manners of their roles. There was

> therefore suspicion that boys who played female roles were emasculated off as well as on the stage.
>
> (Varty, 2008: 48)

As the nineteenth century closed, the social disparagement of displays of male effeminacy was on the increase, with the stage frequently being linked to promoting an over-indulgent and potentially effeminising lifestyle. Two notorious cases characterised mid-to-late Victorian anxieties towards the stage. The first was Boulton and Park in 1871 – two cross-dressing semi-professional actors known as 'Stella and Fanny' who were accused of "conspiring and inciting persons to commit an unnatural offence" in a well-publicised trial. The second was of course the Wilde trials in 1895, credited by literary critic Alan Sinfield as the moment when suspicions of 'effeminacy' became indelibly linked with male homosexuality. As Sinfield shows in his constructionist study of male effeminacy, this was an attitude that persisted in Britain until well into the twentieth century, and its regulatory power effectively ended Wilde's career as a playwright (Sinfield, 1994: 3.) Writing between these two events, it is perhaps no surprise that Dr Granville weighed in on the moral panics around live entertainment in *Youth*, with special attention given to the corrupting influence of naturalist drama on impressionable boys:

> for the most part plays are immoral in their suggestion and the performers intensify the evil. I am not speaking of ballets, burlesques, and the coarser forms of public amusement. I doubt whether the effect of these is at all comparable for the power of corrupting youth with the dramas commonly counted moral. I believe the young are more impressed by the glimpses of what is called "life" which they obtain

> from books, pictures, newspapers, and occasional visits to the theatre […] than by the good advice given to them.
>
> (Mortimer Granville, 1880: 48-49)

Though we should be wary of the extent to which specialist writers like Mortimer Granville influenced overall public opinion, these passages are nevertheless indicative of growing suspicions on the moral effects of live entertainments in the late Victorian era.

As Sinfield rightly argues, charges of effeminacy are rooted in misogyny. It is a concept that functions "to police sexual categories, keeping them pure" and codifies the feminine (and by extension the female) as weak, inferior or as an otherwise undesirable social quality (Sinfield, 1994: 26.) The hierarchical and essentially Darwinist view of gender presentation in males became critical to the self-image of the British empire, with successful displays of manliness in both the social and artistic domains given precedence over women's practices or other non-conforming alternatives. This organisation of power was enforced through threats of social disparagement or sometimes violence, often implicating boys in its dissemination. Referenced by Sinfield in his discussion of the "uses of effeminacy" in literature, the Edwardian poet Norman Gale included a poem in his collection *More Cricket Songs* (1905) entitled "The Female Boy", where he laments that "there would surely be a quick end to my joy/ if possessed of that monster - a feminine boy". In the first stanza of the poem, and in a hugely symbolic gesture that underlined the paternalistic ideology of sport and its role in the strict containment of male effeminacy, Gale vowed to beat any sport-averse son of his with a

cricket stump, couching such punishment in the language of 'reasonable' parental correction[277] (Gale, 1905.)

As a result of these contexts, it is no surprise that 'boy actors' – by which I mean male children who acted on the commercial stage[278] – were less prominent than their female counterparts. This is not to say that the relationship between boys' on-stage activities and wider cultural anxieties about effeminacy during 'the age of empire' was straightforward. Celebrated boy actors had a small renaissance on West End stages around 1900 (though less so in the South West) and could be found in a range of make-believe and thus potentially feminising settings. Critics and audiences saw them star in fairy plays, children's shows, as pantomime animals or in parts known for their gender ambiguity, such as Cedric Errol in Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* or as one of the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Whilst this might on the surface appear to be a sign of a more relaxed view on boyhood femininity, as we shall see much of the critical opinion on boy actors around 1900 was quick to underline evidence of their essential masculinity both on and off the stage, routinely making reference to their 'manful' behaviours or their interest in sports. This constructed notion of a boyish nature runs parallel to a principle introduced in Chapter One – that is, the need for male energy to be channelled and redirected in service of community prosperity. Indeed, it was in community-facing performance practices where boys were significantly more likely to perform, with the historical record in the South West yielding numerous examples of drills

[277] "If cursed by a son who declined to play cricket,
(Supposing him sound and sufficient in thews,)
I'd larrup him well with the third of a wicket,
Selecting safe parts of his body to bruise.
In his mind such an urchin King Solomon had
When he said, Spare the stump, and you bungle the lad!"

[278] Young actresses regularly promoted themselves as 'Boy Actors' in their *Era* professional cards.

and patriotic expressions taking place across the region that positioned boys as their central signifiers. Examining late Victorian and Edwardian boyhood through a performance studies lens shows that the range of acceptable masculinities available to boys remained somewhat limited, with any hint at effeminacy closely regulated by the disciplinary constructs of public display.

In the first part of this chapter, I explore the various factors that led to the rare or restricted appearances of boys on stage during the late Victorian and Edwardian period, particularly notable when analysed in comparison to the stage lives of girls. Secondly, following the standard practice of girls playing boy characters before the turn of the twentieth century, I draw on late Victorian and Edwardian theatre criticism to examine a period in which boy actors 'reclaimed' male roles. Focussing primarily on the case of Master Vyvian Thomas, handpicked by Frances Hodgson Burnett to be the first male actor to play Cedric Errol in a revival of *Little Lord Fauntleroy,* I show how the regulatory anxieties around young masculinities underpinned critical opinion on the production, during both the Wyndham's revival in 1901 and the extensive South West tour of the play in the winter of 1902. Continuing the theme of the stage as a regulatory space, I then consider a moment in the first decade of the twentieth century where idealised boyhood had gained increased cultural consciousness, particularly through the formation of the Scout Movement in 1908. With this, I briefly examine the on-stage representations of Boy Scouts by Master Bobbie Andrews and Master Percy Mayne respectively. Finally, I consider the ways in which boys performed in consensus-building 'strong' performances, to adopt Peter Burke's term (2005: 35.) Specifically, I examine Boys' Brigade demonstrations and Empire Day celebrations that took place in the South West. Through some elaborate dramaturgical features including synchronised movement and

patriotic costume, these events directed the energies of boys (and girls too, in the case of Empire Day) towards a ritualised show of optimism around the future of the British Empire, with the macro-symbol of the nation adapted to solve the immediate crises of local communities across the South West region.

A quick note on the definition of 'boy'. As Mortimer Granville himself recognised, the variance of physical growth in boys was unpredictable. This notion formed part of his rationale for a policy of sex separation, not simply in education but also in play:

> it is impossible to fix the period at which boy-manhood begins; and as the physical indications often fail, it is in the highest degree politic to anticipate rather than delay the change of treatment which befits the transition. Boys suffer irremediable injury to mind and morals by being left too long in the nursery, under a female protectorate. Most of the regrettable habits and propensities of youth date from the earliest years of child-life, and it is then they ought to be checked.
>
> (Mortimer Granville, 1880: 30)

Childhood might also be periodized in relation to the school leaving age. In the eyes of the law, education became compulsory for children up to the age of eleven in 1893 and twelve in 1899[279]. However, when it came to education in relation to children's activities in theatrical entertainments, this is not an entirely reliable measure. As Gillian Arrighi and Victor Emeljanow have pointed out, parental intervention could exempt theatrical children from

[279] "Education leaving age", [https://www.politics.co.uk/reference/education-leaving-age], accessed September 23rd, 2019.

compulsory school attendance laws, particularly if they themselves were in the profession. Alternatively, travelling companies frequently employed tutors for their juvenile workforce (Arrighi and Emeljanow, 2012: 44.) To add a further complexity, the fictive worlds of the commercial stage allowed boys to play characters significantly younger than they actually were. Vyvian Thomas, for instance, played nine-year-old Cedric Errol until he was fourteen; George Hersee was still playing as one of the Darling boys in *Peter Pan* right up until "he lost his boyish voice"[280]. In order to reconcile these on-stage representations with off-stage legal frameworks, I will be working with the sociological definition used by Harry Hendrick in his study of turn-of-the-century male adolescence *Images of Youth: Age, Class, and the Male Youth Problem, 1880-1920* (1990.) For the purposes of this chapter, boys are regarded as male children up to and including the age of fourteen, with young men between the ages of fourteen and eighteen considered to have moved into the grouping of 'lads' or 'youths', to adopt the late Victorian and Edwardian parlance.

Boys on the Page, Boys Off the Stage

Discourses around boys as participants in late Victorian cultural practice have revolved around a couple of key themes: moral panics and the guarding against male effeminacy. The most incisive scholarship on this issue has come from studies of British literature (for example Bristow, 1991; Deane, 2015; Penner, 2016.) This is understandable given the veritable explosion of youth novels, magazines and serials that were published during the period, framing boys as protagonists or readers navigating unfamiliar worlds beyond their

[280] "Duke of York's – Peter Pan", *Globe*, December 28th, 1910, pg. 5.

everyday experiences. Given sustained public attention on young people's leisure options and their educational potential (for good or ill) literature was an ideological battleground where popular discourses of pleasure-seeking and elite discourses of morality were pitched against each other. Joseph Bristow tracks intense reactions to the growing literacy amongst the poorer classes in the mid nineteenth century and their subsequent consumption of 'penny dreadfuls', a loose term to denote cheap, serialised and escapist fiction most often published in instalment or periodical format. This lucrative phenomenon is described by Bristow as "the first kind of truly mass reading" and attracted extensive audiences across class and gender lines, the most visible of which were young working lads in urban areas (Bristow, 1991: 11.)

Despite this emphasis on masculine spectacle in literature, it seems a curious anomaly that the appearances of boys on theatrical stages in Britain were rare or were limited to functional aspects such as moving scenery (Steedman, 1994: 131; Varty, 2008: 1.) Though by no means an absolute rule – as I will show later, there was an increase in the appearance of boy actors around 1900, especially in speaking roles - when it came to fictive or imaginative theatrical presentations in the commercial entertainment venues, girls were overwhelmingly more likely to appear than their male counterparts. This trend stayed consistent through the early part of the twentieth century. A report on the Theatrical Children Licenses Committee offered a long-term industry overview following a consultation chaired by Board of Education Officer F.H. Oates. Presented to Parliament in 1919, it stated that

> the proportion of girls and boys respectively who are licensed to take part in entertainments appears to vary very greatly according to the nature of the performance and otherwise, but speaking generally it

> may be said that the number of boys is only a very small fraction of the number of girls.
>
> (Parliament. House of Commons, 1919)

The first explanation for the fractional status of boys on commercial entertainment stages – though particularly in legitimate theatre – is that a stereotypical perception of 'the natural state of boys' was invoked, incompatible with the discipline and attentiveness required for stage work. This attitude was shared by hugely influential figures in the industry and in wider intellectual circles. Son of Henry, the actor-manager Harry Brodribb Irving toured the country giving lectures on the subject of "Shakespearean Actors in the Eighteenth Century" for specialist audiences, addressing such esteemed institutions as the Manchester Branch of the British Empire Shakespeare Society in 1907[281] and the University of Birmingham in 1908. At these lectures, Irving declared that "boys are notoriously bad actors as a rule and can in no way compare with girls in readiness, natural grace and intelligence"[282], and "we had but to ask ourselves whether the creator of characters to take two instances, like Hermione, or Juliet's Nurse, would prefer to see them acted still by young awkward lads"[283]. A similar sentiment is expressed in an article titled "The Fairies of the Stage", reporting on the work of the Theatrical Mission in London and published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885. It wrote that

[281] "Mr HB Irving on Boy-Actors – A Manchester Lecture", *Pall Mall Gazette,* May 3rd, 1907, pg. 3.
[282] "Inconceivable Nonsense", *The Era,* April 4th, 1908, pg. 17.
[283] "Mr HB Irving on Boy-Actors – A Manchester Lecture", *Pall Mall Gazette,* May 3rd, 1907, pg. 3.

> boys are not usually admitted to the pantomime, unless it is to creep into a fiery dragon or warlike steed. "They are too awkward" is the universal judgment.[284]

Commentaries on the poor quality of boy performers during the period either cited their implicit 'awkwardness' or their difficulty to be contained in rehearsal. Anne Varty refers to the training regimes of Austrian choreographer Katti Lanner, who regularly contributed ballet interludes to the prominent London pantomimes in the 1880s and 1890s. She regarded boys as "deficient" in virtues of "stamina and patience" and that they tended to grow "careless and uninterested" when their repertoire became overly familiar (Varty, 2008: 35.) An account of a rehearsal for an annual Drury Lane pantomime during the period referenced by Raymond Mander and Joseph Mitchenson reinforced this view, observing that "girls always [learned] everything much more quickly than the stupider sex" and that

> boy by boy has to be vigilantly watched, and it has to be made perfectly clear to his possibly not over-lucid mind exactly what he is to do, where he is to stand and when he is to distinguish himself […] There is not such trouble with the young ladies, save in exceptional cases.
>
> (Mander and Mitchenson, 1973: 25-26)

The presupposition of boys as overly boisterous, awkward or even stupid meant that they were not immediately counted on to pick up even basic choreographic sequences in pantomime, never mind the high ideals of Shakespeare or the psychological nuances of early naturalism.

[284] "The Fairies of the Stage", *Pall Mall Gazette,* February 9th 1885, pg. 4.

Secondly, the overwhelming preference for girls on stage during the era can be seen through its politics of sexualised looking, notable in an industry that was predominantly managed and administered by well-to-do men. Within the prominent Victorian mythologies of boyhood that craved a definitive break from the feminine, the theatre and other imaginative spaces offered male audiences the chance to temporarily reconnect with their lost formative years. As Catherine Robson has provocatively argued, these readings rested on a pervasive cultural myth of "feminized origin" that produced male heterosexual desire and its implicit recognition of a loss of innocence (Robson, 2001: 3.) The theatre was particularly suited to the playing out of these fantasies given its typical features of end-on configuration and stage-concentrated lighting, facilitating a scopophilic desire between subject and object that could effectively be played out in secret. Dyan Colclough underlines the implications of these features for stage children:

> No child was more openly accessible to public desire than the child performer. Watching the stage-child from the anonymity of the audience in a darkened auditorium, the Victorian observer was well placed to project escapist sexual fantasies upon the unwitting child performer.
>
> (Colclough, 2016: 92)

Colclough further notes that the theatrical and photographic industries shared a similar child workforce, underlining the complex and potentially exploitative voyeurism of Victorian visual media (2016: 93.)

My focus here is primarily on boys as *performers* – a survey of their involvement in off-stage roles, such as scenic design or backstage activity, warrants further research elsewhere. However, it can be determined that boys were regular theatregoers and would engage with live entertainment in a range of situations. Michael Childs' oral histories of working-class male experiences reveals that the variety hall was a regular fixture in their recreational lives, from family outings as young children to post-work entertainment with their mates as teenagers (Childs, 1994: 130-131.) One of Childs' respondents suggested that live entertainment was a common option for dating, though it is unclear if this would have been a 'respectable' practice across class lines given the interventions of temperance movements. In terms of the South West, this is best exemplified by the efforts of Laura Ormiston Chant who visited Bristol in 1895[285]. Even if these movements had some ameliorative effect on the content of music hall and variety entertainment – it was this shift towards respectability that underpinned Carl Fredricks' alfresco, non-vulgar material explored in Chapter Four – such a popular leisure option must have had some role in moulding the patriarchal values of young male audiences, particularly their understanding of compulsory heterosexuality. The "gallery boys and girls" were a regular feature of the music hall experience, adding a notable vocal element through their recitation of well-known songs or through their responses to other acts on the bill. This often took on the quality of 'knowingness' and performer-audience interpellation, as seen in the case of variety wrestling in Chapter Three. The music-hall star Marie Lloyd visited Bristol in 1898, 'knowingly' described in the *Magpie* as "full of vivacity and brightness, perky, *chic,* and nice"[286] with one of her most popular songs at the time being

[285] "Amusements: Their Use and Abuse – Mrs Ormiston Chant in Bristol", *Western Daily Press,* January 28th 1895, pg. 3.
[286] "Footlights: A Review of the Drama Day by Day", *Bristol Magpie,* January 13th, 1898, pg. 7.

a version of Nellie Power's *The Boy I Love is Up in the Gallery*. Though the lyrics of the song focus on affection rather than sex – "the boy I love is looking now at me", "I haven't got a penny, so we'll live on love and kisses" - the song directly refers to the architectural arrangement of the hall, inviting a "conspiracy of meaning" amongst the youth contingent of the audiences as they associated themselves with the male subject of the song. They could respond to Lloyd's call up to the gods through private fantasy, and we might imagine groups of boys nudging or gently bantering with one another as a way of performatively connecting their (lack of) knowledge in love and sex to the suggestive subtext of the turn (see Bailey, 1994: 163-164.) It was this romantic and interactive fare that played some part in shaping a pleasure-seeking boy's cultural knowledge, particularly in terms of courting and gender roles.

This largely masculine view of feminine spectacle extended to the deliberate androgenising of boy characters. The most prominent example of this convention during the period was Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* whose lead character was routinely cast as a girl, most famously played by Miss Vera Beringer during Burnett's own production at Terry's Theatre in May 1888 [see Fig. 5.2]. It is perhaps no accident, as Kerry Powell has noted, that the dutiful son of the story's title whose primary purpose was to show "the proud old earl […] how to express love and sympathy" was seen to be best demonstrated through cross-gender casting. In other words, girls could play idealised boy characters better than boys themselves (Powell, 1997: 116.) The implication here is that the realm of fantasy and imagination customarily authored by men to project male heterosexual fantasies was seen to be most authentically represented by young girls. Conversely, as they were already part of the way through a process of masculinization through a mix of education, leisure time and physical growth, boys could not inhabit that terrain 'naturally' and would potentially ruin the

fantasy due to their tendency towards graceless or stilted acting. This extended to the rule of cross-gender casting insofar as it did not cut both ways. Indeed Lewis Carroll, one of the case studies Robson draws on to develop her argument about male preoccupation with girlhood (2001: 129-153) wrote in a letter "I wish to withdraw, absolutely, my suggestion of letting boys act any female characters. […] Girls make charming boys […] but boys should never be dressed as girls" (quoted in Varty, 2008: 48.)

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- Figs 5.2-5.5 - Clockwise from top left: Master George Hersee in *Sweet and Twenty,* 1901*;* Master Vyvian Thomas in *The Wilderness* 1901[287]*;* Master Cyril Smith as an old man in an unknown production, c.1902; Master Cyril Smith in khaki for a War Fund Benefit performance at Theatre Royal Drury Lane, 1902.[288]

[287] "Clever Children on the Stage", *The Tatler,* August 28th, 1901, pg. 430.

[288] "Plays and Players", *The Tatler,* April 9th, 1902, pg. 26.

Master Vyvian Thomas as the Little Lord

Despite the general preference for girls on stage, particularly on the London West End, the turn of the twentieth century saw the introduction of a renowned cohort of boy-actors that drew fond critical reception, including Master George Hersee and Master Cyril Smith. Hersee and Smith were each reputed for the playfulness they brought to stage acting, with these interpretations organised around an imagined notion of 'natural' boyishness. An article published in *The Tatler* with the title "Clever Children on the Stage" included a photograph of Hersee "as a delightfully 'boyish' boy" in the comedy *Sweet and Twenty* at the Vaudeville Theatre, a role he reportedly liked best "because in the play he pretends to be a highwayman, and points a *real* pistol" [289] [see Fig. 5.2.] Hersee had previously been praised for his performance in the children's Christmas play *The Snow Man,* with the critic noting his "singular power of carrying healthy, truculent, un-self-conscious boyhood on to the stage"[290]. Doing little to shake the stereotype of boys as inattentive performers, however, Hersee fell asleep on stage whilst playing John Darling as part of the original 1904 company for *Peter Pan.*[291]

As another story published in *The Tatler* a year later demonstrated, Cyril Smith was a particularly mercurial young performer. The son of actress Elsa Gerard, he occupied a whole page spread with publicity photographs of his notable performances, including as a woodsman's son in Beerbohm Tree's production of *Rip van Winkle* (taking over from another

[289] "The Children of the Stage", *Brighton Gazette,* December 26th, 1903, pg. 2.
[290] "Theatrical and Musical Notes", *Morning Post,* November 11th, 1901, pg. 5.
[291] "Heard in the Green Room", *The Sketch,* January 13th, 1909, pg. 18.

prominent boy actor Master Harold de Becker[292]), as the Emperor of Lilliput in the Avenue Theatre's Christmas production of *Gulliver's Travels*[293], and his first role as Peaseblossom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* also at the Tree-managed Her Majesty's Theatre[294]. Perhaps most strikingly, he played a miniature soldier at the Drury Lane's War Benefit Fund dressed in the khakis of the British Army during the Boer War, presumably for comic effect given the size of the rifle [see Fig. 5.5.] The entry of boys into the visual cultures of theatrical magazines suggests an increased trust in their abilities to execute roles with discipline and grace across a variety of performance contexts, from children's Christmas shows to large scale productions of Shakespeare. Nevertheless, the 1901 *Tatler* article still reinforced a relational view of the sexes in terms of their respective capacities for theatrical work, concluding that "boys of ten years of age think more of their games than they do of their future calling" and "at that age little girls have more common sense"[295].

A particularly interesting case through which to examine the conventions of boy actors is that of Master Vyvian Thomas, another young performer given specific attention in the *Tatler's* article. Like Cyril Smith, Thomas came from a theatrical family – his father was the celebrated novelty-song composer Milton Wellings, suggesting a streamlined route into the industry. Defying Carroll's objection to cross-gendered boys, Thomas' first stage appearance at the age of nine was in a support role as 'Katie' in the play *How London Lives* in Autumn 1898, touring as part of a repertory company that visited smaller London venues. The

[292] File relating to productions of Rip van Winkle, University of Bristol Theatre Collection, MM/REF/TH/LO/MAJ/13.
[293] "Costumes in Lilliput and Brobdingnag at the Avenue Theatre", *The Queen, the Lady's Newspaper,* January 4th, 1902, pg. 56.
[294] "Master Cyril Smith", *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News,* April 5th, 1902, pg. 206.
[295] "Clever Children on the Stage", *The Tatler,* August 28th, 1901, pg. 430.

references to these parts in theatre publications switched between the honorific 'Master' included in his first professional card[296] to 'Little' in the reviews, a descriptor typically reserved for girl-actors. Comments on his performance in the play at the Royal County Theatre in Kingston used feminine pronouns – "Little Vyvian Thomas is the recipient of lavish applause for her clever portrait of Katie" – with these writers apparently none the wiser as to his sex. According to a letter writer addressed to the Editor of *The Stage,* it was not unheard of for boys to play "girl-babe parts" and to "sing and skirt-dance" on the turn of the century London stage, as Thomas' castmate Master Ottiwell Hastings had also given cross-gender portrayals in his younger years[297]. This suggests an interesting transfer between Thomas' on-stage representations and his 'professional' persona off-stage. Whilst presented to the industry as a "Child Actor" he nevertheless appeared to 'pass' as female in the fictive space, apparently without any attendant anxieties about his cross-gender display, suggesting that his prepubescent body allowed for the successful suspension of disbelief.

The constructed notion of 'natural acting' was a persistent criterion against which boy actors were judged around 1900. It is notable, then, that it was only from 1899 onwards when Thomas became renowned for his male roles did his on-stage representations court suspicions of gender nonconformity. His performance as Yniold in Maeterlinck's Symbolist play *Pellas and Melisande,* produced as a matinee by Mrs Patrick Campbell at the Royalty Theatre in June 1900, was somewhat disparaged. In a generally negative review, the critic noted that Thomas "might be more boyish; one might be in doubt about his sex from his performance". The same critic also expressed regulatory anxiety towards the lead actor, suggesting that "what Mr.

[296] "Miscellaneous", *The Era,* October 15th, 1898, pg. 8.
[297] "Boys' Parts", *The Stage,* October 6th, 1898, pg. 10.

[Martin] Harvey has to guard against is effeminacy. His is too good a histrionic gift to fall into mere prettiness and smallness of effect"[298]. In a performance culture that prized clever female depictions of masculinity, critical discourse continued to warn against male presentations of femininity, with charges of 'mere prettiness' being levied against men as well as boys.

[REDACTED DUE TO PERMISSIONS ISSUE]

- Fig 5.6 and 5.7 – Miss Vera Beringer (left) as Cedric Errol in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* in Burnett's version following the legal dispute, c.1888[299]; Master Vyvian Thomas in the same role during the Wyndham's revival, January 1902.[300]

As a boy actor at the turn of the twentieth century, Thomas performed in a variety of theatrical genres, from the high-art symbolism of Maeterlinck to light comedies such as *The*

[298] "The Royalty", *The Stage,* June 28th, 1900, pg. 12-13.
[299] Reprinted in article "The Romance of Little Lord Fauntleroy", *The Tatler,* December 25th 1901, pg. 580.
[300] "Little Lord Fauntleroy", *The Sketch,* February 26th, 1902, pg. 212.

Wilderness presented at St James' Theatre in 1901. Perhaps unlike Hersee and Smith, his representations were mostly of upper-class boyhoods, typified by his role as a prince in R.C. Carton's comedy *A Royal Family*[301]. However, he was primarily known for being "the first boy in England to play Lord Fauntleroy", being specifically picked out and trained by Burnett after she saw a performance of *The Wilderness* in Manchester.[302] Revived at Wyndham's Theatre as a matinee for a three-week run in January 1902 – and marketed as a Christmas entertainment to attract family audiences - this novel casting choice attracted significant attention. A writer for the weekly magazine *Clarion* was particularly complimentary of Thomas' depiction of Cedric Errol, wondering why the part had not been taken on by a male actor before:

> Vyvian Thomas, an infant prodigy who is not a bit "prodigious", plays the seven-year-old lord […] to the very life. […] The feature of the revival is the pretty, artless, and unaffected acting of the clever boy I have mentioned: he is infinitely more natural than any of the girls who have preceded him in the part.[303]

An audience member writing in a Ladies' letter column for the *Derby Daily Telegraph* concurred with this view, expressing their appreciation for Thomas' depiction of manly virtues:

> They generally have a girl for this part, but Master Thomas is admirable, absolutely what a little gentleman should be: frank, fearless

[301] "Clever Children on the Stage", *The Tatler,* August 28th, 1901, pg. 430.
[302] "The Children of the Stage", *Brighton Gazette,* December 26th, 1903, pg. 2.
[303] "Stageland – Little Lord Fauntleroy", *Clarion,* January 3rd, 1902, pg. 3.

> and courteous, so unlike the ordinary stage child of squeaky voice and stiff unnatural manner.[304]

Other critical responses were less enthused by Thomas' more 'boyish' self-presentation. During the beginning of its revival at the Wyndham's Theatre in the winter of 1901, a reviewer for the *Morning Post* commented that the sweet idealism of Cedric Errol was undermined by Thomas' masculine characteristics:

> Master Vyvian Thomas was probably as good as a boy could be. But the part is better suited to a girl; it is a fairy, not a human part, and the youngest boy has a virility about him not at all in keeping with the unsubstantiality of the character.[305]

What might have been the same journalist repeated this sentiment a couple of months later when the play had transferred to the Avenue Theatre. Despite praising Thomas' acting, the writer again dismisses the role as "not very boyish, and has been well played in the past by more than one girl actress"[306]. Implicit in such commentary was a predisposition towards a set of regulatory norms, with girls coded as necessarily sweet, innocent and 'unsubstantial', and boys like Thomas lending the role a kind of energetic presence that broke the idealistic illusion.

Under the management of Herbert Grimwood, the play was revived again and undertook an extensive tour of the South West in the Winter of 1902 and Spring of 1903, taking in a range of towns and small venues across the region. These included the Knightstone

[304] "Our Ladies' Letter – By One of Themselves", *Derby Daily Telegraph,* January 14th, 1902, pg. 3.
[305] "Wyndham's – Little Lord Fauntleroy", *Morning Post,* December 27th, 1901, pg. 6.
[306] "Avenue Theatre", *Morning Post,* February 18th, 1902, pg. 5.

Theatre in Weston-super-Mare[307], municipal halls through Cornwall such as St John's Hall Penzance[308] and Druid's Hall Redruth[309], the Public Hall Exmouth[310], and the Town Hall in Trowbridge[311], in total visiting a couple of dozen locations across the region during this time. The course of the tour avoided the key cultural hubs of Bristol, Exeter and Plymouth, suggesting that the production had adapted its design elements and targeted smaller halls in the South West (perhaps to accommodate a limited touring budget.) Owing to his national reputation, Thomas' appearance was foregrounded in the local publicity channels, with the regional presses highlighting his previous success during the production's revival in 1902. Grimwood's company reprinted identical marketing copy at each location of the tour, with the final sentence adjusted accordingly:

> Mr Herbert Grimwood has been fortunate in securing Master Vyvian Thomas who with his marvellously life-like impersonation of Little Lord Fauntleroy made the success of the piece at the Wyndham's Theatre last spring. […] This Company will appear at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Totnes, next Wednesday evening. [312]

Attendance varied over the course of the tour. Its performances in Taunton "did not prove so attractive to Tauntonians as was generally expected it would, and on Thursday evening, when the piece was first presented, the London Assembly-rooms were little more than half-filled"[313].

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[307] "Knightstone Pavilion and Opera House", *Weston-Super-Mare Gazette and General Advertiser,* October 18th 1902, pg. 1.
[308] "Amusements – St John's Hall Penzance", *Cornish Telegraph,* November 12th, 1902, pg. 1.
[309] "Little Lord Fauntleroy at Druids' Hall Next Week", *Cornubian and Redruth Times,* November 14th, 1902, pg. 5.
[310] "Little Lord Fauntleroy at the Public Hall", *Exmouth Journal,* November 29th, 1902, pg. 5.
[311] "Coming Events", *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser,* December 13th 1902, n.p.
[312] "Local Intelligence", *Totnes Weekly Times,* November 15th, 1902, pg. 5.
[313] "Little Lord Fauntleroy", *Taunton Courier,* December 10th, 1902, pg. 5.

The support for the performance at the Salisbury County Hall was similarly "not very encouraging, there being a very poor audience each evening"[314] On the other hand, both matinee and evening performances at Exmouth were met with large audiences, at least according to the local journal[315]. The depiction of upper-class earls and little lords, linked to the possibility for richer families to relocate to coastal holiday homes for the winter months, might explain the variance in the play's popularity at Exmouth compared with more inland communities. It might also suggest that Thomas' appeal owed primarily to London circles of influence and that he was simply not known well enough by theatregoers outside the capital, despite attempts to foreground his success at the Wyndham's in the publicity.

Nevertheless, Thomas' performances themselves were generally received positively during his tour of the South West. The play's appearance at the Cheltenham Opera House in March 1903 remarked on the refreshing – and unprecedented, at least in England - decision to cast a male actor in the title role, challenging "the sceptics who still doubt the possession of any human boy, of those qualities of sympathy, emotion and grace required for such parts"[316]. Another commentator for writing for *The Stage* remarked on how his performance restored masculinity to the role, remarking that

> his natural acting, graceful manner and charming personality amply justify the selection, while he imparts to the character just that touch of

[314] "Little Lord Fauntleroy at the County Hall", *Salisbury and Winchester Journal,* February 26th, 1902, pg. 5.
[315] "Little Lord Fauntleroy at the Public Hall", *Exmouth Journal,* November 29th, 1902, pg. 5.
[316] ""Little Lord Fauntleroy" at the Theatre: An Interesting Revival", *Gloucestershire Echo,* March 24th, 1903, pg. 3.

> boyishness which was wanting in its realization by the clever young actress with whom we were once wont to associate it.[317]

The local report following the performance in Barnstaple also reiterated a boyish essentialism:

> The feature of the production was the marvellous acting, in the title role, of Master Vivian Thomas […] the grace and the naturalness and the vivacity of Master Thomas' acting are simply wonderful in a boy, and the youthful actor promises to have a great career.[318]

In line with the themes of gender and regulatory norms, what is notable about the contemporary critical literature on Thomas and other boy actors was the necessity for writers to underline their essential masculine qualities. During the final stop of the Grimwood tour, the *Leamington Courier* printed an interview with Thomas to emphasise his independent off-stage persona, described in terms that were mostly at odds with the mothered, angelic figure of Cedric Errol:

> he is a ruddy healthy looking lad, with an abundance of fair hair – (he wears a wig on the stage) – and rosy cheeks, as a boy should have. He was ready enough to talk about the part he is playing, but his boyish hobbies – riding ponies, cycling, swimming – appeal to him quite as much and loosen his tongue as freely. […] he is a very frank straight-forward young fellow, full of boyish fun, and not a bit spoilt by what people say about his genius. As he walks down the street in flannels,

[317] "Cheltenham Opera House", *The Stage,* March 26th, 1903, pg. 6.
[318] "Barnstaple Theatre", *North Devon Journal,* December 4th, 1902, pg. 5.

> with a complexion upon which grease paint has at yet levied no tribute, one would take him for the happy school boy he is, and never suspect that his serious occupation was on the stage, and not in the class room.[319]

Perhaps as a corrective to the gender-ambiguous coding of *Fauntleroy,* the interviewer persistently referred to Thomas as a 'lad', 'boy', or 'fellow' who performed an off-stage masculinity that was appropriately healthy, energetic and decisive. The boundaries between the two spheres of his identity were clearly marked through a change in hair, costuming and behaviour, with the teenage boy underneath the trappings of Burnett's idealistic world remaining secure in his 'natural' and uncorrupted maleness.

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- Fig. 5.8 - Publicity photograph for *Her Son,* depicting Miss Winifred Emery and Master Bobbie Andrews in the lead roles, printed in *The Sketch,* 1907.[320]

[319] "Little Lord Fauntleroy – Interview and Reminiscences", *Leamington Spa Courier,* July 3rd, 1903, pg. 6.
[320] ""Her Son", At the Playhouse", *The Sketch,* March 20th 1907, pg. 3.

Development and Anti-Development

This principle of masculine reassertion was also applied to another precocious talent introduced to the West End and provincial stages later in the decade: Master Bobbie Andrews. There are two examples from his early stage career that speak to the idea of masculinity as a performed strategy against effeminacy. Andrews toured the provincial theatres in a dramatized version of Bath-based novelist Horace Annesley Vachell's *Her Son,* which included a stint at the Prince's Theatre, Bristol in June 1908. A writer for the *Western Daily Press* reserved special attention for the young actor, the tone of the review being one of pleasant surprise:

> Master Bobby Andrews appears in his original part of Min. Stage children are usually a nuisance, and generally associated with squeaky bathos. Master Andrew's playing is remarkable, because it is absolutely unaffected. He is a wholesome boyish English boy, and speaks clearly and naturally. He is certain to be a great favourite all the week.[321]

A similar sentiment was expressed by the *Clifton Society:*

> Children on the stage are frequently most un-child-like, and nothing is more distressing than the perky, stilted, theatrical child-automaton. Master Bobbie Andrews is the very opposite of all this. He plays *Min* (his original part) quite unaffectedly and with an entire absence of self-consciousness altogether delightful. It is curious, but even a slight lisp

[321] "Amusements in Bristol – Prince's Theatre – "Her Son", *Western Daily Press,* June 2nd, 1908, pg. 5.

> does not detract from his performance, so perfectly natural and unforced is it.[322]

The idealism is unmistakeable in both accounts. The first reviewer points out Andrews' appeal as a 'wholesome' and even typically 'English' boy, unencumbered by the awkward or off-putting vocal qualities of the average stage-child. With a nod to the essentialising maxim of 'boys will be boys', the second reviewer describes Andrews' acting skills in terms of its naturalness that struck a perfect balance between scripted routine and the instinctive dynamics of child's play. This is what Marah Gubar refers to as the "non-autonomous agency" that characterised the children's theatre movements of the late nineteenth century. As Gubar argues, this mediated autonomy was a construction of naturalness that went some way to determining its appeal amongst adults and children alike (Gubar, 2009: 182.)

What is notable about Cedric Errol in *Fauntleroy* and Min in *Her Son* is that both characters are portrayed as having close and positive relationships with their mothers – indeed, the mother-son bond are both the thematic and narrative cores of each play. This perhaps presents a challenge to the notion of masculine detachment. In fact, Min says in the dramatized version of the novel "I am funky because I have been brought up in a parcel of women", perhaps quite jarring for a character who is supposed to be eight years old (at the time of its original revival at the New Theatre, Andrews himself was twelve)[323]. The critical opinion on Andrews' performance might be read as an expression of this regulatory anxiety. In a similar way to Thomas, whose masculine representation of Cedric did not prevent a critic dismissing the character as a 'fairy', Andrews' part was also subject to a predisposed set of

[322] "Clifton Society", *Clifton Society,* June 4th, 1908, pg. 8.
[323] ""Her Son" at the New", *Sporting Life,* September 3rd 1907, pg. 4.

readings around gender ambiguity. A commentator for the *Tatler* adopted a similar language that spoke to the feminising qualities of stage fairyland, prizing Andrews' male authenticity over any pretence towards fantasy:

> the most lifelike performance in Mr Horace Annesley Vachell's pathetic little drama after Miss Emery's is that of the boy, Min, by Master Bobby Andrews, who is a real boy and not the usual stage imp.[324]

Like Thomas, and of course like Carl Fredricks in Chapter Four, the influence on-stage representations had over off-stage behaviours persisted as a source of anxiety, calling for boys to successfully transfer between multiple sets of practice. Whilst showing a feminine side or demonstrating emotional or physical attachment to maternal figures on stage was not in itself an undesirable quality of boy actors, this more expressive form of playing was permissible only if boys still met the criteria of male authenticity – a *real boy*, not a gender-indeterminate fairy or an imp.

[324] "Her Son", *The Tatler,* September 11th, 1907, pg. 214.

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Fig. 5.9 – Illustration of scene in *Where Children Rule,* with Master Bobbie Andrews and Miss Bella Terry in the lead roles. Published in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News,* January 1st, 1910.

Fig 5.10 – Posed photograph of Master Bobbie Andrews as David Pennyfeather in *Where Children Rule. The Sphere,* December 25th, 1909.

Another aspect to critical praise of boy actors was not only for their ability to display masculine qualities, but also for their 'cross-aging'. In other words, what recurred in the cases of Thomas and Andrews was their precocious capacity, playing characters who appeared younger or older than they actually were. Thomas was fourteen years old by the final tour date of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* in Leamington Spa in July 1903. Quite what the *Morning Post* reviewer would have made of Thomas continuing to play the role into his early teens is unclear, but given that he was probably undergoing a growth spurt and a breaking voice, his body was surely becoming increasingly at odds with the 'fairy' ideal prized by that critic. In the interview published by the *Leamington Courier* at the close of his Fauntleroy run, Thomas himself recognised his advancing years[325].

This theme of growth is borne out in a second example of one of Andrews' early performances in Sydney Blow and Douglas Hoare's musical fantasy play *Where Children Rule,* produced at the Garrick Theatre in 1909. In line with themes of fantasy and eternal childhood depicted in the period's signature children's show *Peter Pan,* the story follows the fortunes of David Pennyfeather (played by Andrews) who along with his sister discovers a world in which "disagreeable and downtrodden adults" are ruled over by children "with a rod of iron" thanks to the spell of an enchanted dandelion[326]. Andrews' performance as the Boy Scout was couched in his ability to signify sufficiently masculine fashioning and behaviour, an achievement that contemporary writers were quick to note:

> nothing could be more manly than the boy scout of Master Bobbie Andrews in *Where Children Rule* […] Under the old *regime* the boy was

[325] "Little Lord Fauntleroy – Interview and Reminiscences", *Leamington Spa Courier,* July 3rd, 1903, pg. 6.
[326] "Gossip from the Green-Room – The New Garrick Play", *The Tatler,* December 22nd, 1909, pg. 11.

> somewhat intractable to the old stage management. Thus it was that little girls were found to play the part of Lord Fauntleroy, and even in *The Blue Bird* the little boy is played by a little lass. […] it is […] certain that no girl could play the part of the Boy Scout as Master Bobbie Andrews does at the Garrick.[327]

Adopting the vocabulary of imperial manliness, *The Tatler* commented that Andrews "won everybody's heart by his soldierly bearing as the Boy Scout and his wonderful dignity and grasp of every situation as it arose"[328]. However, the nature of the play suggests that this representation was primarily for ironic purposes. *Where Children Rule's* central conceit of cross-aging was its key comic effect, and its success depended on set pieces that subverted the typical parent-child relationship, perhaps to resonate with the primary audience's own experiences. For example, the adults are sent to bed without supper, and a duet between a small boy and a six-foot-plus man (deliberately cast) concludes with the latter lying over the boy's knee for a spanking (Blow and Hoare, 1909: 11-12.) The comic ambiguity around male physical development was also reflected in a gag about a boy's voice starting to break and therefore gradually morphing into the enemy[329]. As a result, the critical reception focussed primarily on the precocious qualities of the child company, and especially Andrews. There is little attempt to hide Andrews' youth in the publicity photographs [see. Fig 5.10] though his depiction in illustrated form appears to slightly exaggerate his physical stature as if to distinguish him from his little sister [see Fig 5.9] Perhaps intentionally, this makes him seem

[327] "Children as Entertainers of Themselves and Others", *The Graphic,* December 25th, 1909, pg. 884.
[328] "Gossip from the Green-Room – The New Garrick Play", *The Tatler,* December 22nd, 1909, pg. 11.
[329] "Theatricals – Garrick – "Where Children Rule" (A Fantasy in Four Acts)", *The Sportsman,* December 13th, 1909, pg. 8.

a fully developed young frontiersman and not primarily the thoughtful and industrious boy presented in the play itself. Either way, Andrews' performance in the play was met with great acclaim, not simply due to his impressive acting skills but for his 'manful' representation of a desirable masculine type.

- Fig 5.11 - Souvenir postcard of father and son Ernie and Percy Mayne, cast in the Prince's Theatre Bristol's 1910-1911 pantomime *Jack Horner*.[330]

[330] Mr Ernie Mayne and Master Percy Mayne, n.d., Bristol Archives, 43207/31/2/2/3.

This developmental model of young masculinity – and conversely an anti-developmental model in adult men – was none more encapsulated than by the figure of the Boy Scout. Soon after the Scout Movement's formation in 1908, the uniforms and behaviours typical of scouting were deployed in popular entertainment, often for the purposes of preposterous comedy. In Bristol, thirteen-year-old Master Percy Mayne was the only boy in the cast of the Prince's Theatre pantomime *Jack Horner* during their 1910-1911 winter season. He was part of a company that beyond the named principals included an adult male chorus and a group of girl dancers from a local ballet school[331]. He was only passingly referenced in the lukewarm critical responses to the pantomime despite his inclusion in its visual publicity, suggesting that the extent of his contribution to the show was either minimal or unremarkable, or perhaps both.[332] However, Mayne's performance as a Boy Scout alongside father Ernie (a significant music-hall star of the time) spoke to a prominent trend in late-Victorian and Edwardian popular culture where the boundary between adult and child was transient. Bradley Deane unpicks the conflicting dynamic between empire and boyhood inherent in the late Victorian taste for 'new imperialism', identifying Scouting as a key terrain for the fostering of child-men and man-children. On the one hand, according to Deane, "boys had to grow up in order to fulfil their ideological role in the grand narratives of empire", yet on the other there was open resistance from adult men towards the imperatives of "masculine maturation". Scouting founder Robert Baden-Powell is described by Deane as one of a few of these "ostentatiously boyish men" and that in enduring boyishness "imperialists had found […] a

[331] Playbill (satin), Prince's Theatre, Bristol "Jack Horner" (Pantomime), Official Visit, University of Bristol Theatre Collection, TC/PB/601.

[332] Prince's Theatre scrapbook of press cuttings 1902- c.1912 (compiled by Mrs Chute, wife of James Macready), University of Bristol Theatre Collection, VAR/2.

natural and suitably anti-developmental model of identity" (Deane, 2014: 85-86.) The above souvenir postcard is a striking portrayal of such a model. Percy's thoughtful facial expression whilst in the 'at-ease' position is set against the bumbling slapstick suggested by Ernie's demeanour. Appropriate to the visual signifiers of empire and British mythologies of frontier conquest, the tableau is rounded off with a homemade-looking Union Jack and fully kitted-out scout uniforms. To fully emphasise the playful ambiguity of their characters, man and boy each wear the same size hat [see Fig 5.11.]

The on-stage visual spectacle presented cross-generational bodies where the age-codified performer's stature was juxtaposed with his role-specific behaviours and costuming. In the case of Mayne and son, this technique had obvious comic effect that was suitable for the subversive visual humour of the family pantomime. Perhaps more significantly, it played on the audience's cultural references of imperial 'man-children', with the Boer War exploits of Baden-Powell and his establishment of the Scout Movement in 1907 well-reported and surely primed in theatregoers' minds. Baden-Powell's introduction to *Scouting for Boys* begins nostalgically with "I Was A Boy Once" setting the tone for his description of "camping and backwoods activities, which are as much enjoyed by the instructor as they are by the boy", thus making little discrimination between manly and boyish interests (Baden-Powell, 1908.) Baden-Powell had created a distinctive cultural signifier that not only captured an ideal of boyhood that was intelligent, dutiful and attentive but also a recognisable archetype of male anti-development that conflated the responsible maturity attributed to men with the carefree, adventurous impulses seen as typical in boys. An older and slightly overweight comedian donning the Boy Scout uniform foregrounds such an ambiguity for comic effect, with the adolescent body of his son sportingly providing a 'foil' that underlines Ernie's excesses: a

grown man in the mould of Baden-Powell adopting the trappings of boyhood. Thirteen years old at the time of the opening of *Jack Horner*, Percy was himself in something of a liminal state – not yet an adult in the eyes of the law, but certainly not an infant either, perhaps adding an additional subversive quality to the skit ('Percy Frederick Thomas Barratt', 1897.)

Whilst scouting has been interpreted as rooted in men's imagination to reconnect with their boyhood, the iconography of the Boy Scout in *Where Children Rule* was deployed in terms of an outward appearance of maturity and preparedness, key values that Baden-Powell sought to inculcate in his charges. The Scout Movement shared similar objectives to other youth organisations such as the Young Men's Christian Association insofar as each sought to channel the energies of boys and young men towards desirable community outcomes. Though these organisations did not tend to provide resources for theatrical activities at their various branches – there are no indications of this in the material from the Taunton or Tiverton YMCAs – the cases explored so far in this chapter ran along a similar theme of channelling. Critical perspectives on boy actors persistently referred to an essential boyish nature that boasted limitless energy and playfulness, which the regulatory frameworks of the stage would redirect through a range of dramaturgical modes including fairy plays, melodramas or revivals of classics. Masculine authenticity was achieved either through straightforward portrayals of 'natural' boyishness that were embodied without self-consciousness or affectedness by talented boy actors, or through a process of modulation where the potentially feminising on-stage representation by the boy performer was legitimised by critics' emphasis on his off-stage masculine persona.

With this common factor between youth organisations and the commercial stage in mind, I will now move beyond practices that originated on the London West End stage.

Despite each of the case studies here having provincial afterlives through extensive tours or short residencies, it would be interesting for the benefit of a regional focus to explore how the principles of 'boy-nature' and modulated energy were borne out of – and addressed to – specific South West communities. This is to ask whether boys' representational labour shifted at a more targeted geographical level, and how we account for the rarity of boy actors on commercial, metropolitan entertainment stages on the one hand, yet their frequency in community-organised public displays on the other.

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- Fig 5.12 - Glastonbury Boys' Brigade Band, pictured with Rev Henry Barnwell and Mr. Stead, Town Councillor, c. 1910.[333]

[333]Glastonbury Boys' Brigade, n.d., Somerset Archives and Local Studies, DM/RLM/48/15.

Performances of Consensus: Boys' Brigade Demonstrations and Empire Day

At the turn of the twentieth century, public ceremonies or pageants that underlined Britain's status as a moral, industrial and military powerhouse on the global stage were commonplace in the South West of England, and frequently involved the participation of children. In a similar way to the Poole's Myriorama, the iconography of God and the King were also foregrounded in these events and they adopted a range of scenographic features, including flags, banners and uniforms. Perhaps more vitally, these pro-imperialist displays were most recognisable outside designated entertainment venues, taking place on thoroughfares, in municipal function halls, football stadia or school playgrounds. Historian Peter Burke adopts the useful term "performances of consensus" to describe such events where local institutions acted as conduits for the public dissemination of an imperial message, involving a temporary suspension of the normal function of communal spaces to disrupt the rhythms of everyday life (Burke, 2005: 39; Beaven and Griffiths, 2015: 380.) Whilst these practices projected a homogenous ideal of national strength through the performed labours of children, they were also used as opportunities to address and implicate smaller communities of people, inviting questions as to how mythologies of 'empire' or 'Britishness' could be adapted to suit the needs of a specific locale.

As Chapter One explored, what is notable about these organisations was not simply their self-proclaimed duty to redirect boyish energies towards mature and disciplined manliness but how these organisations adopted consciously theatrical strategies to disseminate this kind of development. This is strongly exemplified by the various South West factions of the Boys' Brigade. Formed at a national level by William Alexander Smith in Glasgow in 1883, the goal of the organisation was to encourage a Christian form of masculinity

in boys, combining wholesome recreational activities with military discipline. Its core values were again expressed through the lexicon of 'redirection' or 'chanelling':

> All a boy's aspirations are towards *manliness,* however mistaken his ideas may sometimes be as to what that manliness means. Our boys are full of earnest desire to be brave, true *men;* and if we want to make them brave, true *Christian* men, we must direct this desire into the right channel […] We must show them the manliness of Christianity.
>
> (quoted in Sinfield, 1994: 63)

As Chris Spackman has shown in his study of the Brigade's development in port towns before the First World War, these practices were best characterised by camping excursions (significantly in Bristol) that would frequently draw the attention of local media (Spackman, 2016.) Whilst these trips included public-facing sports days that were similar to amateur athletic events, battalions in the South West also organised more consciously 'theatrical' occasions to spread their message. The objectives of the Brigade were secured through a role-model structure where values of obedience and punctuality were taught and 'shown' to the Battalion's young charges, and then crucially shown back to communities through public display. The events or demonstrations they organised had distinct spatial conventions, sometimes combining the end-on actor-audience configurations of purpose-built stages with the temporary taking over of exterior communal areas, including roads or public parks. The content of the performances focussed on ensemble-based synchronicity with specific dramaturgical features, including rehearsed sequences of military drill, meticulously presented uniforms and occasionally musical accompaniment from a specially engaged band.

Surviving references to Boys' Brigade demonstrations that took place in the South West come predominantly in the form of photographs alongside eager newspaper correspondence. However, some first-hand 'ego-documents' on the topic remain. In his diary detailing various experiences of Bristol in the late Victorian period, the artist, author and pallbearer (by trade) William Henry Bow described "a public meeting and demonstration of the Bristol Battalion of the Boys Brigade" that took place at Colston Hall on February 14th 1893. The entry emphasised the interrelationship between youth organisations and civic space, and Bow expressed a positive response to this public-facing cultivation of the community's future men:

> It started at 8, and they had a parade of all the companies of the brigade & marched em up the platform, forms em up for a general salute while the massed bands of the Brigade played. Then they sang hymns and prayers, and the chairman made his address to the people. A squad of boys were marched on the platform and put through an exhibition of company drill, and at the word of command they drills fine, in line, forming fours, all ways marching up and down & and going along at the double, wheeling into line again &c. Good it was & they were applauded muchly. […] Another display of the 7th Bristol Company, with arms, gave a show of musical drill, all spread out, swinging them about here & there, and changing and stamping &c. Looked very well indeed, much pleased the people it did. […] I went down to the floor of the hall & mixed among the people, and then the Lesser Hall & seen the boys bands forming up to leave, and they all seemed sturdy little men

> indeed & will make good soldiers in time. They forms up in the street, and with bands playing, marches off up through the city with people along also.
>
> (Bow, 1986: 29-30)

In this short passage, it appears that Bow somewhat misunderstood the primary purpose of the organisation. Whilst the exercises and drills on display were derived from military training, the Brigade was not intended as a recruitment scheme for the British Army. An address from a local church official at the event was reported to have said that "the movement was not intended to foster any military spirit among the boys but it was hoped that the habits of discipline gained would do a great deal to fit the lads to fight the battle of life that lay before them [334] . Despite these assurances, the meticulous choreography of the Brigade demonstrations nevertheless gave themselves up to potential readings of militarism.

Bow's account reflected the extent to which youth organisations were invested in developing bodies that could perform the signifiers of Christian soldierliness, and how their outlets for public dissemination were consciously theatrical. The most striking features in this vein were the sequences of formation marching. Through Bow's description, we can see how important it was for these carefully choreographed bodies to be 'exhibited' to sizeable and community-derived audiences, and that these exhibitions would take place on stages typically reserved for matters of public concern (both interior and exterior.) That such a seemingly small event would take place in as prominent a venue as Colston Hall, a building that was (and remains) central in the geographical sense yet also in terms of municipal influence,

[334] "The Boys' Brigade at the Colston Hall", *Western Daily Press,* February 15th, 1893, pg. 7.

suggests that theatrical spectacle was recognised as having affective, consensus-building potential.

Whilst these displays recurred annually at Colston Hall over subsequent years[335] there were other examples across the city and the wider region that operated on smaller scales, though they still retained the advocacy of key authority figures in their target communities. Another newspaper report describes a similar Boys' Brigade demonstration that took place in Redland Park Hall in 1898, presided over by the High Sherriff of Bristol Mr. F Richardson Cross, whose address at the event highlighted the Brigade's key teachings of "discipline, regularity, punctuality, obedience and many other good qualities, as well as improving [boys'] physical manliness"[336]. Across the South West, there were factions of the organisation at varying geographical scales, including at Ilminster[337] and Glastonbury [see 5.12.] In 1910, the Wessex Battalion of the Boys' Brigade held their annual demonstration in Bridgwater, comprising twelve companies from the local area including Yeovil, Castle Cary and North Petherton for a total of around six hundred boys.[338] Like the amateur athletic events explored in Chapter One, this collective demonstration was spearheaded by men with significant municipal influence, including church leaders, local military personnel and the Mayor of Bridgwater R.O. Sully (as Chapter One showed, it was common for men in positions of authority to also operate in the same social circles.) The houses and streets of Bridgwater were decorated with flags for the occasion, with the local reporter describing the town as "quite *en*

[335] "Bristol Boys' Brigade – Demonstration at Colston Hall", *Western Daily Press,* February 12th, 1896, pg. 3.
[336] "Bristol Boys' Brigade", *Western Daily Press*, February 16th, 1898, pg. 5.
[337] "1st Ilminster Company Boys' Brigade", *Chard and Ilminster News,* April 11th, 1908, pg. 5.
[338] "Wessex Battalion of the Boys' Brigade – Great Demonstration at Bridgwater – Award of the Colours", *Western Chronicle,* April 1st, 1910, pg. 8.

fete" in its celebratory impression[339]. The temporary taking over of civic space was a key aspect to the Brigade's objectives towards masculine spectacle. During an evening address from the Yeovil chaplain, Rev W.G Butt, it was declared that the purpose of this event was to direct the participants towards an authentically Christian masculinity and crucially away from maternal influences. He said that the organisers of the Brigade

> wanted their boys to be bright and brave. They wanted the boys to be religious, not like their grandmothers but in their own peculiar way. Their boys were today fighting for their country, because they were producing manhood, and manhood was the greatest asset in the country. (Hear, hear)[340].

Over the course of the day, this manhood was produced through a range of theatrical strategies. The day began with a procession through the streets of Bridgwater and was followed by a mass inspection, presided over by Colonel Edward Trevor, a commander in the local battalion of the Territorial Forces. He remarked on the lads' success in delivering the march through the town, though he did point out the occasional tendency for boys to look down at their feet and that "one or two boys walked as if crossing a ploughed field", suggesting his advocacy of sustained personal improvement. The evening display consisted of each company in the battalion offering a performed "item", with pyramid gymnastic displays, dumbbell exercises and figure marching on offer, with the latter spelling out "Boy's Brigade" and "R.O Sully" as a way of flattering the host town's first citizen.[341]

[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid.

The common factor between these routines was the emphasis placed on 'the unit', with choreographed ensemble movement depending on unified effort and thus a temporary suppression of ego. Despite this, Colonel Trevor in his address repeated a sentiment made in Bristol years before: these displays were not designed to turn boys into soldiers necessarily, but merely to channel their energies towards improvement of their bodies, souls and by extension the communities they lived in. Apart from displaying the effects of their physical training, these practices embedded the Brigade's principles of obedience and discipline and importantly were directed towards a singular manly goal – that is, duty towards higher authority. This was primarily taken to mean the abstract notions of God and King, but also duty towards more immediate figures of authority in their communities such as their parents, religious leaders or, of course, mayors.

With this in mind, what is telling about these Boys' Brigade 'performances' is that they were seldom regarded as such, with journalistic sources far more likely to refer to proceedings as 'demonstrations'. This could be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, the term might imply an attempt to ward off any threats of 'theatricality', with the choreographed routines typically delivered without emotion or, indeed, any sense of gender ambiguity. The uniforms, movement and objects used in the display (such as Indian clubs or dumbbells) contributed towards the 'building' of a Christian masculinity and offered boys access to an identity distinct from their sisters and mothers. In other words, these activities allowed boys to express their masculinity – or even more importantly their lack of femininity - through a set of ritualised and repeated gestures. Secondly, as a cultural practice that was specifically organised for its inherent public benefit, the displays were not simply encouraging Christian manliness amongst local boys but were literally *demonstrating* those qualities back to the community.

With manhood persistently coded as "the greatest asset in the country" by authority figures the Boys' Brigade demonstrations attempted to show men and boys diverting their energetic potential towards community prosperity. To borrow Reverend Butt's phrasing, by 'producing manhood' in the course of the demonstration, through those very same gestures they were also 'fighting' for the values of Christianity and British sovereignty, perceived as crucial to the moral health of various South West communities.

Self-reflexive community displays that foregrounded the physical labours of children were not only male-centric. The potent imagery of nation, God, and the monarchy towards the imperial cause became pervasive after 1900 and could be disseminated in public displays by both boys and girls. In terms of child participation, this is reflected most forcefully by Empire Day, established by Lord Meath in approximately 1903. Again, despite their pretensions to a singular, homogenous imperial voice, Empire Day events were most frequently organised at the level of micro-communities with activities reflecting local needs and aspirations. This was particularly the case in schools, with visual and journalistic references suggesting an element of agency in individual cases regarding which aspects of the Empire that would be taught and what kinds of displays would be organised. In their comparative study of Empire Day iterations in England, Australia and New Zealand during the formative years of the movement (1903-1914) Brad Beaven and John Griffiths "challenge the assumption that a hegemonic imperial ideology was streamed uncontested and unaltered to the urban population at large" and that the potent imagery and messages of the Day could be deployed primarily to solve local issues, most notably in settlements across Britain (Beaven and Griffiths, 2015: 378.) Examples of South West celebrations take this analysis two further rungs down the scale, with evidence revealing the participation (or lack thereof) of towns and

villages, and even further down to individual educational settings. What this suggests is an ever-shifting set of readings around the imperial message, similar to the moving-between negotiated by Poole's Myriorama in Chapter Four. Against a backdrop of overlapping or divergent civic identities, Lord Meath's vision of a unified expression of imperial pride proved elusive, at least before 1914.


EMPIRE DAY.

An effective tableau at the St. Thomas Boys' School, Exeter.

- Fig 5.13 - "An effective tableau at the St Thomas Boys' School, Exeter", 1909.[342]

[342] "Empire Day! – Celebrations in Devonshire – Duty of the Children", *Devon and Exeter Gazette,* May 25th, 1909, pg.8. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

An illustrative example of this overlap came from Exeter and its surrounding towns during the 1910 celebrations, a few months after the death of George V. The local presses, though particularly the *Express and Echo,* gave extensive reports on the contributions of local schools in and around the city. This suggests some close and harmonious dialogue between school leadership and local print media. The schools adopted a similar programme of activities that typically included patriotic songs, a flag ceremony, a brief address from an influential community figure, and some form of performance ritual or sporting activity (before the surely well-anticipated half-day holiday.) However, the take-home message of the events varied between locations, with King George's death taking on fluctuating degrees of significance. Inner-city council schools for boys, such as Paradise Place, foregrounded the death of the King in their sentiments to transmit specific masculine values, with the chairman of the local education authority impressing on the boys the importance of discipline and obedience. "No one", he said, "realised responsibility more than our late beloved King" and that "Boys should always value duty, and they need not wait to be men before they began to be dutiful"[343]. The event concluded with a costume cricket match in which the two teams represented "Mother Country" and "Colonials" respectively. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the ideological clout of the occasion, the Mother Country emerged triumphant.[344] In comparison, the "quietly observed" celebrations in Topsham were "considerably curtailed" in the light of the King's passing, with the events not developing further than a few musical interludes performed by groups of selected school-children. The Ladysmith Road schools in Heavitree cancelled the celebrations completely.[345] This illustrates Brad Beaven's point that

[343] "Empire Day – Celebrations in the Exeter Schools – Interesting Scenes", *Express & Echo,* May 24th, 1910, pg. 1.
[344] Ibid.
[345] "Empire Day in Exeter", *Express & Echo,* May 24th, 1910, pg. 2.

the Empire Day movement – and the imperial project in general - was not received unquestioningly by all strata of British society and that there could even be variance of response within individual cities as he has shown in the particular case studies of Portsmouth, Leeds and Coventry (Beaven, 2012: 153-163.) It shows that micro-communities could adapt their participation in the wave of imperial excitement according to practical considerations, or even sometimes through principled resistance to the imperial message.

The second important factor of Empire Day celebrations were their consciously elaborate theatricality. Theatrical conventions of role-playing, ensemble movement, colourful scenography and brass-band music were commonplace across the geographical scales, giving the proceedings a multi-sensory quality to create visually and sonically arresting *mises-en-scene*. Each of these could be drawn on to express the organising signifier of British pride, extending gestures of brotherhood and mutual support to the nation's colonial subjects. One example of this was the spectacle of cultural cross-dressing, with both boys and girls attired in the national dress of various colonies including Canada, South Africa and India, and engaging in processions and renditions of patriotic songs such as "Proudly the Standard of England".[346] Costumed tableaux could be used as a visual and interactive mode of learning, with boys adopting the fashioning of male imperial icons, including the Indian Maharaja. A photograph of such a display at St Thomas' Boys' School in Exeter was published in the local press, demonstrating the patriotic scenic design typical of Devon classrooms during Empire Day. Union Jacks, drapery and royal symbols offered a backdrop to the children's costumed bodies, with the ebullient figure of John Bull taking pride of place in the centre [see Fig. 5.13.]

[346] "Empire Day – Celebrations in the Exeter Schools – Interesting Scenes", *Express & Echo,* May 24th, 1910, pg. 1.

In a similar way to the Boys' Brigade demonstration in Bridgwater, this theatricality went beyond the classrooms and playground and out into the civic environment. The press reports on the celebrations in Totnes in 1908 described an environment "bedecked from end to end with flags, bunting and patriotic mottoes" with these visual details used to reinforce the town's proud civic identity, suggesting that "it is a characteristic of the ancient and loyal Borough that patriotic demonstrations in it have never lacked thoroughness"[347]. The *Chard and Ilminster News* dedicated significant column inches to the events in the district, where the town of Chard combined the pageantry of the local schools with a procession of men involved in local municipal services, such as the fire department and police force.[348] As much as local Empire Day events were fractal realisations of Meath's over-arching vision of 'God, Duty and Empire', examples such as Chard show how extra-daily theatrical techniques could be used to express the quality and progressiveness of local services to the immediate community, perhaps for authorities to use the iconography of the Empire as a means of building consensus around their own municipal projects.

[347] "Empire Day Celebration at Totnes", *Totnes Times and Devon Journal,* May 30th, 1908, pg. 8.
[348] "Empire Day Observances in the District", *Chard and Ilminster News,* May 29th, 1909, pg. 8.

- Fig 5.14 - 2,500 Children form a Union Jack on Empire Day at Ashton Gate, Bristol, taken by A.E. Smith, May 24th 1911.[349]

As briefly mentioned in the case of the Bridgwater processions, a common mode of theatrical expression on Empire Day was the figure formation. This was a preferable performance style for a few reasons, particularly when the participating cohorts were exclusively made up of children. Firstly, it involved a relative simplicity of choreography, able to be picked up by even the least experienced child. Secondly, unlike theatrical tableaux that may have been engaged in by older pupils, there was minimal requirement for children to take up a fictive character or demonstrate well-practised performance skills, beyond smiling or perhaps choral singing. Thirdly, and most importantly, the human formation was by design able to foster a temporary sense of 'communitas' amongst its participants and give a physical shape to collective organisation. With a prescribed costume and designated spatial position,

[349]2,500 Children Form a Union Jack on Empire Day at Ashton Gate, May 24th 1911, Vaughan Collection, Bristol Archives, 43207/22/8/4.

the formation was a literal manifestation of the impact individual action could have on a bigger picture. These elements of discipline and obedience in service of a larger symbol were paramount to the Empire Day project and its core messages. A frequent refrain in local commentary on the celebrations was the importance of unity and that "every individual person in the nation helped to form its character". Short of the overt militarism of the Boys' Brigade drills, the ensemble-led spectacles of human formations provided an opportunity for the movement's core values of "responsibility, duty, sympathy and self-sacrifice"[350] to not only be signified through performance but also realised through a process of rehearsal. Each individual child learned and rehearsed their own contribution to complete a definitive, poignant and eminently reproducible set of images.

The pictures formed during these demonstrations tended to be of flags, or occasionally they spelled out words significant to the imperial project. 150 boys of the St John's Hospital School in Exeter engaged in a drill in which their choreographed bodies spelled out "England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales" and their respective dates of unification, underlining the importance of a lesson they received on the Empire's formative history earlier in the day. They also formed a Union Jack by "extending on the ground and giving an effective display" with the commentator pointing out such an exercise's role in developing the boys' muscularity in combination with a profound intellectual benefit.[351] The flexible structures of human formation could suit a variety of spatial arrangements. Whilst this display took place in an Exeter schoolyard, in 1911 the Bristol branch of the Victoria League took the Union Jack formation to the much greater scale of a football stadium, arranging a striking display that

[350] "Empire Day – Mayor of Exeter's Address to the P.S.A – Widespread Celebrations", *Western Times,* May 25th, 1908, pg. 2.
[351] "Empire Day in Exeter", *Express & Echo,* May 24th, 1910, pg. 2.

involved 2,501 schoolchildren and witnessed by over 10,000 locals [see Fig 5.14.] The "Living Union Jack" sequence was part of a larger programme of items performed at the Ashton Gate football ground, which included a group of secondary school girls performing an exercise sequence with a state-of the-art physical developer and boys from the same school performing with dumb-bells, underlining the important role of physical culture in the transmission of the imperial message. The flag formation was regarded as the main event and involved selected groups of children dressed in red, white or blue moving onto the pitch, passing and saluting the Lord Mayor in the stands before taking their allotted positions to build the constituent parts of the Union Jack. This culminated in a choral rendition of "Flag of Britain" and a "really remarkable and memorable display of Swedish exercises" to which a local reporter responded emotively "it was as if this wonderful flag was a flag indeed, and that the breeze had got beneath it and rippled its folds"[352]. Addressing the juvenile readership of a neighbourhood free press, another commentator observed that "there was the appearance of a storm passing over the flag, and the realistic effect was applauded nearly frantically, as it deserved to be" and noting instructively that "the children were very reverent".[353] This is a clear indication of how the visual and corporeal aspects of theatrical practice, such as singing, choreographed movement and codified costume, could be deployed efficaciously, or at least with the intention of wider community 'impact'. Aside from its newspaper coverage, the Bristol event in 1911 achieved a legacy through its photographic and cinematic documentation. The event was so prestigious that it was filmed and broadcast at local picture theatres just a few days afterwards, though these materials do not survive today[354]. The 'precocious labour' of children

[352] "Empire Day in Bristol – Celebrated by the Children – Striking Display at Ashton Gate", *Western Daily Press,* May 23rd, 1911, pg. 4.
[353] "The Children's Corner", *Horfield and Bishopston Record,* May 27th, 1911, pg. 3.
[354] ""Living Union Jack Film"", *Western Daily Press,* May 27th, 1911, pg. 7.

through Empire Day pageantry may well have had positive effects on their bodies, intellects and sense of moral direction; however, these performances were primarily geared towards a consolidation of the social order.

This chapter has taken case studies from a range of performance contexts, including commercial entertainment and civic public displays, to explore the representational labour of boys within the specific ideological mechanism of live performance. I initially focussed on practices originating in the London West End, but these were selected on the basis that they had 'afterlives' in the South West, and the final section of the chapter focused on civic ceremony specifically in the region. The range of discourses around boys in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain - including medical opinion, local politics and theatre criticism - tended to assert an essential 'boy-nature' that either justified the decision not to include them on stage or as the source of limitless energy that could be channelled towards particular ideological goals, most notably the quasi-militaristic imperatives of empire that abounded at the turn of the twentieth century.

The medium of public display was one tool that could be deployed towards constructing the certitude of an 'authentic' and 'natural' masculinity through the bodies of boy participants and in turn concealing anxieties about Britain's precarious future. With key public platforms often in the hands of social elites – from the prominent managers of the West End to circles of influence at local or municipal levels – the practices explored here tended to view boyhood as a narrow social identity that could only be enacted through a limited range of behaviours, typically shows of strength, spatial dominance and unselfishness. Alternatives to these scripts were discouraged by organisational elites and other facets of social influence (most notably theatre critics) particularly if their performances hinted at gender ambiguity or

outright girlishness. In essence, and in line with a key principle of this thesis, live performance could be one way in which a patriarchal gender order could be reasserted, presupposing the respective 'natures' of the sexes and regulating social relations on that basis. The case studies in this chapter show that these regulatory efforts were particularly pronounced as the British empire experienced challenges to its dominance. In the age of imperial anxiety, attitudes towards young masculinities not only centred on 'boys will be boys' as if accompanied by a sigh and a shrug. In these cases, the message also seemed to be: boys *will* be boys – boys *must* be boys – or else the compelling myths of British imperial strength would fall short in their practice, and might ultimately consign the imperial project to failure.

CONCLUSION

The history of masculinity is to a great extent a history of performance, or more specifically, of performed representations. It is significant that scholars from outside the field of theatre and performance history frequently use dramaturgical metaphors to describe the social and psychic ramifications of masculinity. The sociologist Chris Brickell, for example, outlines ways in which performances of a gendered self are constituted through a negotiation of a 'front' stage (in which the subject performs) and a backstage (where "the actor practices impression management and the techniques required to accomplish a successful presentation") (Brickell, 2005: 30.) However, as the Introduction to the thesis suggested, it is important to recognise that the history of performed masculinities is also a history of a complex set of power relations that cannot be readily subsumed into a straightforward, universalising model of 'hegemonic masculinity'. This thesis has shown that there were many multifarious and coexistent conceptions of what being a man or boy meant in the South West of England and that these would frequently differ along the lines of class or geography. Further, the evidence has suggested that individuals moved between social formations over the life-course or even in the course of a day, a feature exemplified by Carl Fredricks, Vyvian Thomas, Fred Luffman and I would argue all of the other performers discussed in this study.

In this way, the investigation has been productively steered by Ben Griffin's proposition of an alternative framework for 'writing' historical configurations of masculinity. His call to focus on "communication communities" as objects of analysis and to give greater attention to the "historically specific opportunities, mechanisms or techniques that enabled individuals to identify themselves with […] normative models" (Griffin, 2018: 12) has leant a precision to this research and helped it avoid a fall-back on mere myths and stereotypes of

gender. It is notable, then, that Griffin also uses the lexicon of the theatre to describe his ideal methodological approach to gender history, insofar as it

> focusses precisely on the connections between the cultural and social histories of masculinity. It acknowledges that an understanding of gender as performative needs to be accompanied by a recognition that an individual's ability to undertake a particular gender performance requires access not only to the relevant script, but also access to the correct props and to an audience capable of understanding that performance.
>
> (Griffin, 2018: 12)

However, these myths and stereotypes have not been entirely cast aside in this project. In fact, they have proven to be necessary in forging an understanding of how live cultural products helped to shift around dominant ideas about manliness alongside other representational media operating at the turn of the twentieth century. The live practices considered here were frequently influenced by forms such as sculpture, painting and literature, each of which could construct men and their bodies in iconic or otherwise desirable ways. This is especially relevant to the sensationalised visual representations of strongmen such as Sandow and Hackenschmidt and how those depictions of their bodies were positioned to resonate with Herculean concepts of muscular masculinity. However, the live context yielded a distinct relationship between representation and interpretation in a way that those other media did not. As a result, the way in which ideals about manliness were circulated in such practices is worth special consideration. This does not necessarily present an outright challenge to Griffin's alternative framework – after all, each of the case studies explored here

were subject to specific material and economic conditions and can easily be read as circuits of communication in their own rights. Nevertheless, it does place the socio-cultural activity of live public display in a unique position within this alternative methodology. Whilst one of Griffin's chief critiques of the hegemonic model is that it makes no clear distinction between representations of ideals and everyday social practice, the case studies explored in this thesis have shown that the gap between the two could be blurred if not closed entirely. In other words, live performance events that had prior organisation in the form of training or rehearsal and that took place in spaces designated for the purpose are outliers in Griffin's historiographical approach in that they operate between the 'real' world of social affairs (life as it is) and the world of cultural imaginaries that could be promulgated by specific communication communities (life as it could be, or ideally be.) Importantly, these examples are uniquely characterised by their 'liveness' where the performed action on stage and the interpretative labour undertaken by those bearing witness occur simultaneously, and so *directly* exposing the performer to failures, lapses and misreadings that could undermine the hegemonic power of the masculinity on show.

Through the many kinds of 'strong performance' analysed here, I have adapted Griffin's model to make a distinction between everyday performances of masculinity and those that were disseminated in the extra-daily spaces of theatre, variety entertainment, sport and civic ceremony in the South West around 1900. To use Griffin's term, my contention has been that these case studies were very specific 'mechanisms' through which social elites could express their values and consolidate their influence. In addition, these displays could also be the means through which men and boys could attain a masculine status in accordance with the norms and expectations of the communication community in which their performance

took place. In this thesis, the performers committed their labour towards the representation of such masculine archetypes as Greek athletes or Boer War soldiers even if their off-stage personas or their bodies could not fully emulate those mythic standards. Given this persistent interplay and essential quality of liveness, such events are not easily accommodated into a model that keeps representations and practices as separate. Thinking of masculinity instead as a set of practised representations that could be affirmed, scrutinised, or occasionally rejected in a designated public-facing place demonstrates a unique intervention in the field of turn-of-the-twentieth century gender history. It broadens our understanding of the two-way dialogue between off-stage anxieties about the future of British manhood and the on-stage representations of desirable masculine behaviours that were configured to regulate those anxieties.

In tandem with this key critical intervention, the study has brought together a range of disciplines through which to analyse live and embodied spectacles of masculinity in South West England at the turn of the twentieth century including modern social history, visual studies, anthropology, theatre history and sports studies. Further, the regional focus of the study has considered the topography of British performance culture around 1900 in more targeted detail, tracking developments in form and content outside late Victorian London (even if these practices would not yet be entirely independent of the capital.) By drawing on material originating in – or directly pertaining to – the South West of England, I have opened up new lines of inquiry into the relationship between community-facing performances and the ways in which these public displays may have helped to form collective civic identity. Even if these performances may have drawn on large-scale symbolism such as the Union Jack or antiquarian ideals of the male body, by calibrating the analysis towards the various micro-

cultures of the South West (and across the spectrum of cities, towns and villages) the study provides new insight into how the potent ideologies of 'Britishness' and 'manliness' were adapted for live consumption and reconfigured to address local - and not merely national - crises.

The five performance contexts explored in this thesis, then, each configured their participating (male) bodies in ways that were indicative of the communities in which the events took place. Their common factor was that in the act of performance, each situated manhood as a significant marker that stood in for the present (or future) prosperity of that community. In so doing, these performances transmitted a remedy to the perils of a rapidly modernising society and perceived crises in masculinity, seen to be set in motion by changes in leisure, technology and industry. Crisis has been read here not as an objective, readily identifiable moment that appears and disappears – as if there has ever been an 'uncritical' moment in history - but as an ideological, discursive tool. 'Crisis' could be deployed to direct particular knowledges about the gender order, to seek correction to failures or perhaps even to reiterate the interests of social elites.

Thinking of 'crisis' as a performative utterance – there is no 'crisis' before its designation as such – has allowed us to consider two things in relation to public displays of masculinity around the turn of the twentieth century. First, it invites an analysis of the ways in which national sentiments 'filtered down' to localised levels, with messages about the strength of the empire frequently tailored to the immediate needs of the producing community. Secondly, it reveals the affective potential of the live performance moment itself. In its very structure of 'showing-doing', the men or boys involved in these case studies disseminated ideals or myths of masculinity in a direct encounter with invested audiences,

who were primed with their own preconceptions about gender roles and their importance to their own communities. As such, the liveness of performance exposed male bodies and their labours to a range of unpredictable readings, ultimately undermining claims to a fixed or 'natural' notion of manliness.

The connected phenomena of *constructed certitudes* of maleness on the one hand and *failure* as the essential condition of live representation on the other appear in each of the case studies explored in this thesis. The first chapter considered organised amateur sport as a response to the potentially debilitating effects of sedentary male lifestyles, particularly those in middle-class, desk-based employment. By promoting a standard of 'equilibrium' – a harmonious balance between a man's work, leisure and spiritual capacities – amateur sport associations and youth organizations had a model through which to channel 'male energies' towards positive social goals, most immediately at the local level. The rhetoric of rationalisation and self-control revealed an essentially liberalist maxim: that the solution to wider social problems was seen to be best secured through individual enterprise.

Extending masculinity's emphasis on self-discipline and active physical development, the second chapter examined the appearances of Eugen Sandow in Bristol and his dual capacity as a showman and entrepreneur. His body-building repertoires in variety theatres foregrounded a 'looking-back' to classical male bodies from antiquity and offered a visually compelling corrective to the sloppiness of modern living. At the same time, however, these shows were entrenched in a 'scopic economy' that monetised the human capacity to stare at the novel or incredible, exposing the performing subject to a multifarious set of readings that spoke to individualised desires or anxieties. This 'representational excess' not only took advantage of the failure and risk inherent to the live performance moment, but can also be

used to describe Sandow's clever marketing practices where his brand of products and courses of physical exercise were demonstrated through the bodies of other men. In this context of unpredictability, Sandow was a key example of what Christopher Forth calls "the double logic of civilization" (2008: 5) insofar as he embodied a coherent solution to the volatility of modern living through schemes of physical culture, yet the consumerist overtones of that culture thrived on that same volatility.

The third chapter saw a 'craze' around wrestler-showmen who directed their practices of bodybuilding, health writing and personal branding to the popular consumer market. In the spectacular context of the variety hall, these 'professional bodies' would invite the challenges of local men to compete in bespoke wrestling bouts, most significantly in the urban centres of Bristol and Exeter. These matches were embedded in a web of 'knowingness' between participants, organisers and audiences, making the adversarial dynamics of sport and the exclusionary (though temporary) rhetoric of civic pride essential aspects of the spectacle. Despite the appeal of a giant-killing narrative in which the plucky amateur was pitched as the potential conqueror of the established champion, the spectacular framework had the effect of concealing what was otherwise fairly obvious: that the amateur would ultimately fail, even if the match was drawn out for longer than necessary in order to sustain the entertainment.

Chapter Four examined the on- and off-stage personas of Carl Fredricks, whose refined representations across a range of character types and performance techniques were offset by the logistics of sustaining a middle-class social identity. Whilst his career coincided with greater professionalisation of the industry, the evidence shows a continuous need for him to adapt to unfamiliar communities and living arrangements during his family's lengthy

periods of touring, and so that self-image of security and prosperity had to be continuously performed anew. Despite this, visual documentation indicates that Carl Fredricks' body was well-fed and well-dressed, conveying a man who participated in the march of imperialism through the presentation of his body on stage and up-to-date family-friendly material. These performances foregrounded ideals of respectability, refinement and British imperialism, and were most clearly expressed in the Poole's Myriorama tours and in Fredricks' various concert parties. His career, therefore, provides some microscopic detail on the way in which middle-class respectability had an increasingly portable element. His practices also reveal some key aspects of British popular entertainment at the turn of the twentieth century including global narratives tailored to local interest, repertories consistently adapting to ever-changing events and different locales, and the presentation of Anglocentric histories in visually spectacular - if factually dubious - ways.

Through similar processes of 'redirection' or 'harnessing' that underpinned Chapter One's youth organisations, the fifth and final chapter focussed on the various public displays in which boys participated, either in commercial theatre practices or in community-directed performances of consensus. In performance, boys themselves literally embodied a double logic. On the one hand, their smaller physical stature and higher-pitched voices harked back to a nostalgic past – especially in more commercial examples such as *Where Children Rule*, their participation on stage can be read as part of a popular interest in fantasy and utopia. Even if these imaginative worlds were far more likely to be populated by girls, when boys did appear their representations of soldiers, frontiersmen, 'little lords' and so on staged the linked mythologies of manliness and Empire through their developing bodies. On the other hand, particularly in response to discourses of a "male youth problem" (Hendrick, 1990) live

performance offered an imaginative realm that 'looked forward' to the community's future men, assuring invested audiences that the diagnosis of a boy crisis was premature, or at least avertable. These were achieved through consciously theatrical devices such as drill demonstrations or flag formations and supported by evocative dramaturgical features such as costume or banners. To use the telling phrase offered by Yeovil's Reverend W.G Butt in his address to an assembly of the region's factions of the Boys' Brigade, these displays had the effect of "producing manhood" on the understanding that manhood was an inherent asset to the social and political life of the region, and to the country as a whole.

Whether deliberately or not, it is notable that the Reverend summarised a core view on masculinity in 1909 that persists one hundred and eleven years later. Though I myself find the meshing of manhood ideologies and nationalism a cause for concern in our contemporary moment, I nevertheless support Butt's contention that masculinity is not a biological inevitability built into males at birth but instead a fragile social status to be strived for and conferred onto an individual. Importantly to my purposes here, this transfer of status often took place through peer-facing public displays. Masculinity was – and continues to be – a fictive set of ideals and myths that are nevertheless capable of guiding men's behaviours in a range of contexts, either through artistic representations or through everyday social exchanges. In other words, as Butt pointed out, it is "produced". This is to emphasise that masculinity is the result of a co-constitutive process between individual and his social context. "In this sense", writes anthropologist David Gilmore, "we may look at manhood scripts not only as avenues to personal aggrandizement or psychic development but – more importantly – as codes of belonging in a hard, often threatening world" (Gilmore, 1990: 224.)

As I have shown, the affective and emotive power of live performance had the potential to forge these codes of belonging, and the events explored here sought to find coherence in a world going through significant and unpredictable change. These case studies have demonstrated the role of male-predominating public displays in helping to shape discourses around masculinity in South West England, and more widely, have shown how gendered norms were invoked to serve a range of vested interests, often those of social elites. In its various and overlapping guises, masculinity has been shown here as an embodied quality, a consumable good, a source of untapped energy and as a socio-political persona, most frequently as the public face of empire. This thesis, then, has taken an interdisciplinary approach to try and make sense of these many fictions of masculinity as produced through logics of consumerism, religion and other institutional structures, and then subsequently reiterated through the medium of public display in the South West.

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